

Conference Proceedings

*8th FOREST EUROPE
Ministerial Conference*

Bratislava, 14 - 15 April 2021



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An abstract graphic in the bottom half of the page consists of numerous circles of varying sizes connected by thin lines, creating a network-like structure. The circles and lines are rendered in a light green color, matching the text. The circles are scattered across the bottom half, with some larger circles acting as hubs and many smaller circles as nodes. The lines connect these nodes, forming a complex web.

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Opening of the Conference

Words of Welcome

Ms. Zuzana Čaputová

President of the Slovak Republic

SLOVAKIA



Dear ministers,

Dear Janez Potočnik,

Dear participants,

It is my great pleasure to address you today.

This year's motto "The future we want, the forest we need", perfectly highlights how important sustainable forest management is for nature, our people and our future.

Climate adaptation and strengthening resilience is a priority. Nature-based solutions can improve forest functions. We must apply them wherever possible because sustainably managed forests are better for our health, economy and climate. European forests have always had three main, often conflicting roles: environmental, social and economic, but they are also absolutely crucial in addressing the climate crisis. Given the growing demand for forest limited resources and capacities, the best way forward to reconcile these diverse interests is to apply sustainability as a guiding principle.

To reach net-zero by 2050, we need healthy ecosystems rich on biodiversity to capture and store CO₂. Forests equally protect soils from erosion, provide nutrition, clean air, fresh water and serve as natural harbours for wildlife.

Dear ministers, dear all,

Everybody needs to lead by example. Office of the Slovak President will therefore become the first public climate-neutral institution in Slovakia by 2030 and I hope that many others will follow. Planting trees and biodiversity protection is an integral part of this journey. I invite you to act sustainably to benefit of forests, climate and biodiversity.

I wish you all a productive conference.

Words of Welcome

Mr. Ján Mičovský

*Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
of the Slovak Republic*

SLOVAKIA



Dear ministers, dear colleagues,

let me welcome you to our beautiful Slovakia, in the Forestry Open-air Museum in Vydrovská valley, near Čierny Balog.

In this valley, I managed to make my big dream come true. I have always wanted to give the Slovaks, as well as people from the other countries, an opportunity to learn the values of the forest and the importance of forestry, and real work in forests. That is why we established this Forestry Open-air Museum more than 20 years ago.

Here, on the Forest Time Path, as we called it, almost a hundred thousand of visitors come every year to learn the history of the Slovak forestry, almost 700 years long, as well as the reality of our forests today. However, I must confess that this is not the only dream I have had in this valley. There's another one and you have to admit that having two dreams in one place is uncommon. The second dream was that representatives from European countries and forest organisations would come together here to say that there is time to see forests from a different perspective. To say that the forests exist not only to provide timber but also fresh water, clean air, mental and physical health for humans. I am convinced that, thanks to you, thanks to our meeting, my second dream will come true.

Today, we are going to make the future. The future that would be impossible without healthy forests. I think, this is what brings us together at the Eighth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference where I would like to welcome you again, together with our German friends. I believe, that the future of European forestry is that what we need to discuss at this Conference.

I am convinced that, at this conference, many ideas will emerge, proving that we owe a lot to nature and forests but we can do much more for them and we can look at a forest from a new perspective. The perspective revealing their true values, showing how to prevent the negative impacts of climate change, talking how to increase the aesthetic values of forests, their resilience and stability, and to bring what the society really expects from forests.

Let me say that the motto of the conference we have chosen is very nice: 'The future we want, the forests we need.' It's a very clever sentence that has several meanings. As a host of this conference, I would like to add one more motto. We are in the area where one of the greatest Slovak foresters, Jozef Dekrét Matejovie, was born, in Dobroč, not so far from here. And this forester, who lived at the turn of the 18th and 19th century, had a short motto: "Let's preserve forests to our descendants." This is a sentence we need to remember and I am convinced that this conference will significantly contribute to realizing the idea behind this old motto.

Welcome again, "Lesu zdar", my friends!

Words of Welcome

Ms. Julia Klöckner

*Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture
of the Federal Republic of Germany*

GERMANY



Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Hello to all of you.

Welcome to all of you to the 8th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference. I regret that we cannot meet in person in the beautiful city of Bratislava today due to the pandemic.

I was all the more delighted at the initiative by Minister Mičovský to organise a physical follow up meeting of the Forest Europe ministers in Bratislava soon, as the pandemic permits. I appreciate the invitation. But first of all, let me thank the Slovak Republic and especially the Liaison unit Bratislava for their excellent work as the Chair of our Pan-European process over the past five years. We are delighted to take over the new chairing country building on the successful work of our Slovak friends, the Liaison unit Bonn has already started its work and is highly motivated to advance this process.

Colleagues,

Let us look ahead, true to the motto of this conference “The future we want, the forest we need”.

Due to reports on massive forest damage Europe’s forests have been in the limelight of the public. Our forests are in distress, we must protect them better. We all need healthy forests. There is hardly a greater project spanning several generations. Our forests have so much to offer. They mitigate climate change in supply raw material. They are main pillar of bio economy, the key to biodiversity and a place of recreation. We must help our forests. We must encourage the sustainable management of forests.

Every country must do more at the national level, especially in Europe we must at the same time develop solutions across borders. This is a decisive here for Europe’s forests as we are now implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy and preparing the EU Forest Strategy is part of the European Green deal.

I hope that we will actively address the challenges and opportunities we face together. And it is up to all of us to do it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished colleagues,

I trust that this will be a successful conference with a close exchange and stimulating discussions. And I hope it will provide a clear roadmap for the next four years.

Thank you very much and I wish you a fruitful start into the conference day.

Key-note Speech

Mr. Janez Potočnik

*Co-chair of the International Resource Panel
at the UNEP, and former EU Commissioner*



Dear ministers, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for invitation and trust.

No question at all, important developments were triggered by the European Green Deal for Europe, but also globally - a new growth strategy acknowledging that environmental and economic goals are not in contradiction, setting zero net emissions of GHG by 2050 and introducing the need for decoupling growth from resource use while acknowledging the need for fair and just transition. The real challenges remain linked to uncertainty of the implementation. How to address drivers and pressures leading to challenges we have to solve? How to offer enough systemic perspective to guide decision making? And how to address the extra risk due to covid recovery needs?

One cannot discuss all that, without taking into account essential role of natural resource management, and forest among them. Natural resources are the bridge between economy and competitiveness on one hand and climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and health implications on the other.

European Green Deal should not be understood as a Communication adopted in December 2019, but rather as a set of documents and measures based on the general orientation set in the Communication.

Forests need specific attention and management, but it would be a mistake to look at them in isolation. Forest policy needs to be well coordinated with other policies but should not be just a complement to other policies or a helpful instrument to achieve various political goals. We need a holistic long-term vision - a strong forests related European Green Deal arm!

Without forests and forest-based solutions, we will miss an important part of the potential of our sustainability related efforts, including those related to the economic transformation that Europe needs and sustainable future requires.

There are many important potential contributions and opportunities related to forest. We all know the importance forests play as carbon sinks. The role forests play in climate related solutions should be increased. Achieving a circular economy, which is one of the central pillars of the Green Deal, can also contribute to that goal and can be accelerated through the sustainable use of forest resources. There is an important opportunity for replacing some of the non-renewable based products with renewable, and it should be exploited, of course always tested through the life-cycle effects on climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and health implications. Industrial sectors such as construction, textiles, packaging or chemicals will need to move towards low carbon business models and forest-based solutions could help reaching the climate-neutrality. With emerging technologies, we can now sustainably transform wood into a new range of wood-based solutions that can replace and environmentally outperform fossil products and non-renewable materials such as plastics, concrete or steel. Carefully, of course, closely monitored and respecting sustainability rules.

Sustainable forestry and forest sector can play also an important role in realising another ambition of the EGD - a socially fair transition and more equitable distribution of prosperity. The way forests are distributed, own and managed and the way forest resources are processed, plays an important role. They offer a great opportunity to distribute jobs, infrastructures, wellbeing and prosperity. Forest sector provides more jobs in Europe than the steel, cement and chemicals industries together, but it is only now hopefully getting proper attention.

Forest-based economy ultimately relies on healthy and resilient forest ecosystems. Therefore, investing in protecting forest-eco systems and biodiversity is a precondition for a sustainable and long-term, also economically sustainable forest sector. This also means that with the right policy framework and incentives a well-functioning forest-based sector can become an important vehicle for ecosystem, biodiversity related investments. Public money is of course important and needed, but private investments are needed too.

Let me conclude by sharing with you some basic principles that should guide us:

- All our future efforts, including in the area of forestry, should be guided by sustainability respecting long-term based strategic interest designed by EGD.
- Restoring and protecting the forestry eco-systems, with an aim to enhance biodiversity it hosts, is essential.
- The role of forests as carbon sinks should be increased.
- When evaluating potential forest contributions to the effective adaptation and mitigation climate change policies, life-cycle approach and analyses should be used.
- One should exploit the opportunities forests offer in circular bioeconomy approach by replacing some of the non-renewable resources with renewable wood potential.
- When potential economic use of forest resources is considered, it should be guided by the cascading logic.
- Good, 'sustainable forest management' practice matters and should be our aim.
- Protecting public interests should be accompanied with public support, including public funding possibilities.

Dear friends, to conclude. I know that today's event brought together policymakers also from beyond European Union. My introduction is indeed EU focused, but that is not changing the fact, that messages are valid for all. Forests are our precious natural capital, and they deserve proper attention. Solution, noble as it is, to plant more trees, will unfortunately not solve the forestry and sustainability related problems. The questions are more complex and related to holistic management of forests. We need more and better knowledge, like the one produced by my colleagues from the European Forest Institute. Complexity deserves a self-standing, forest focused reflection and an integrated strategic approach. Yes, different local conditions deserve different solutions, but there is a lot in common we could share and jointly address. Commission does not have an easy job and current debates are quite intense and heated. They do not need additional pressures and lobbying efforts, but rather a sincere help enabling them to empower us all together to deliver important forest related public interests. And today this should be in our mind, in your mind, in the first place.

I wish us good debates and thank you for your attention.



Ministerial Roundtable 1:

Adapting forests to changing climate

Climate change is ongoing and, besides the global warming trend (current global temperatures are already 1 degree higher compared to the pre-industrial levels), it is particularly worrying that extreme events are amplified, resulting in extended periods of hot spells and drought. In recent years, European forests have been affected by severe droughts, widespread wildfires, a series of windstorms, and rapidly expanding bark beetle infestations, somewhere accompanied by new invasive pests. Evidence is increasing that these events have become much more frequent and more threatening because of ongoing climate change. What makes this situation different from the past is not only the number of disturbances but also the extent of damage and the fact that severe disturbances are occurring all over Europe even in a single year, often in locations that have not experienced similar events before. It is also noteworthy that observed impacts exceeded the expectations from past impact projections. With continuing climate warming, the current extreme weather patterns may soon become common and the future will probably bring even more extreme temperatures and drought spells. There are calls for adapting forest species composition and a changed silviculture to adapt to changing climate conditions as well as to meet new demands which society puts on forests.

There are various approaches to climate-change adaptation and many supporting measures to be considered. A group of experts nominated by signatory countries and the EU coordinated by the Liaison Unit Bratislava (secretariat of FOREST EUROPE in 2016-2020) developed a set of policy recommendations for integration of adaptation measures into sustainable forest management (SFM) in Europe (see https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Key-conclusions_CC.pdf).

Effective adaptation policies must be responsive to a wide variety of economic, social, environmental and political circumstances. A high priority should be, however, given to the coping with and adapting to forest disturbances while maintaining and enhancing the diversity and resilience of forest ecosystems.

The forestry community, as well as the public, need to understand the effects of climate change on forests and determine which adaptive actions could be taken now and in the future to respond to this threat.

In this regard, the Bratislava Ministerial Resolution, endorsed at the Conference, has provided a mandate to establish a pan-European forest risk knowledge hub.

Following statements are originals provided by signatories and observers and have not undergone the language editing.

Belgium

Mr. Jean-Pierre Scohy

*General Inspector of the Nature and Forest
Department of the Walloon Region*

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Belgium would first like to warmly thank the organizers of this important event which takes place in such a special context.

Belgium wishes to answer the four questions structuring this round table through concrete initiatives implemented in the three regions of the country.

Enhancing resilience and adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems under climate change

First of all, there is the conservation of the forest microclimate by setting up a mixed irregular silviculture in which clear-cutting is limited in area; this approach is a clear general orientation in the public forest.

We also focus on natural regeneration while stressing the importance of expanding the gene pool of species.

There is also an increasing emphasis on protecting forest soils from compaction. It should also be noted that Flanders is experimenting the revitalization of acidified forest soils by adding lime to planting holes and encouraging species that may enrich litter.

The regions plan to strengthen their forest health observatories and to change their legislation and practices to allow for greater responsiveness during health crises.

The regions have also developed tools to help selecting species to be preferred during forest renewal and in existing stands, with recommendations for climate change.

Finally, renewed attention is paid to the impact of game on forest rejuvenation through more effective population control or methods of

protecting young trees.

Supporting scientific knowledge and motivation of forest owners to increase forest resilience and adaptive capacity

For the regions, it has become essential to enrich the genetic basis of forests and thus to encourage research in forest genetics with a particular focus on assisted migration via more suitable provenances such as more southern provenances for the main species and in particular for the beech. It should be noted that Flanders is working to strengthen a complete value chain of forest breeding material, from identification to commercialization of climate-resistant species.

Regarding the motivation of the owners, let us highlight the current initiative of the Walloon government to support forest regeneration, for private and public owners, according to specific principles: minimum three species, adapted to climate change and favorable to biodiversity; the aid is 15 million Euros and is part of the recovery plan. In Flanders, there is also aid for the conversion to mixed forests of indigenous species as part of the European Union's rural development programme.

Increasing transboundary and cross-sectoral cooperation

Belgium supports the EUFORGEN programme, which is a remarkable example of cross-border cooperation; it also supports the future pan-European risk management Hub which should be a particularly relevant tool in the future.

Belgium suggests that better collaboration between the different forest health observatories at European level should be considered.

Belgium finally encourages the removal of constraints in the transfer of suitable forest breeding material.

Adapting wood-based industry

Belgium identifies two inevitable developments: the change in the nature and structure of the resource, and the emergence of the circular economy. It therefore considers that the following main developments are necessary :

An adaptation of the tool and harvesting techniques to mixed and irregular stands. This is the upstream link of the wood industry, which in the future should buy and harvest more and more itself

The development of a “form of agility” i.e. an ability to adapt to different sizes and species. It is therefore a question of developing a less rigid industrial tool, less dependent on a “standard” raw material

The need for a closer connection of the processing industry with design and implementation (custom industrialization).

The development of the use of round woods, especially small ones, as lumber.

The development of low-environmental wood protection techniques due to the use of naturally less resistant local wood.

The development of wood chemistry to increase the added value of related products.

The redevelopment of a local wood processing sector, not only the traditional sector but also the niche products sector and the promotion of the use of local wood.

Thank you for your attention



Czech Republic

Mr. Patrik Mlynář

*Deputy Minister of Agriculture,
Czech Republic*

Ministers,

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

First, let me express my deep gratitude to you, Mister Minister Mičovský, the Slovak government, and the Liaison Unit Bratislava for flawless preparation of this Ministerial Conference, despite of unfavourable conditions caused by coronavirus pandemic.

At the last Ministerial Conference in Madrid, I mentioned that we, in Czechia, faced environmental challenges, such as adverse impacts of climate change on forests. That longer and more profound periods of drought caused dieback of less tolerant tree species, namely Norway spruce, and that therefore we needed to invest into the change of the tree species composition of forests.

Unfortunately, since then the situation aggravated with unprecedented speed and developed into the biggest bark beetle outbreak that we have ever faced both in terms of affected forest area and of infested timber volume. The record high sanitary cutting led to extraordinary surplus of timber and subsequent collapse of the market. Low timber prices left forest owner in critical economic situation that endangered both the protection of forests against the bark beetle and subsequent forest restoration.

Our response was very complex and required a cooperation across numerous ministries. It included, inter alia, regulation of planned felling, creation of conditions for transport of timber both on roads and on railways and its storing, development and implementation of innovative treatments of infested timber, or employment of new methods of forest monitoring. It also involved amendments to the forest law to give forest owners more flexibility when regenerating the affected forest stands, but at the same time

to ensure the new forests are diverse in terms of tree species and spatial structure and therefore resilient. We introduced new subsidies, aiming both at compensating the loss of income caused by forced sanitary cutting, and at restoring the damaged forests.

Yet, the crisis is not over as there is still relatively high area of forests potentially vulnerable to displays of changing climate. Therefore, their adaptation as well as the restoration of damaged forests is a task of utmost importance. We must prevent repetition of such a large-scale forest disturbances in future.

Let me also mention that high sanitary cutting had also severe impact on carbon balance of our forests, leading to net emissions of carbon dioxide from forest management for the first time in the history of their accounting. Here we can see certain superficiality of continuous political pressures on increasing carbon stocks in forests. That can be achieved mostly by increasing aboveground biomass; however, it often makes the forests vulnerable to disturbances. Adaptation of forests to climate change must get priority as only well-adapted and resilient forest can fulfil its mitigation potential.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

That is why we fully support the adoption of the Bratislava Ministerial Resolution on Adapting pan-European Forests to Climate Change. We look forward to working towards a coordinated pan-European forest risk knowledge mechanism and are ready to take active role in its development.

Finally, let me wish Madame Minister Klöckner, and the newly established Liaison Unit Bonn the best of luck in the upcoming presidency to the FOREST EUROPE process.

Thank you for your attention.

Cyprus

Mr. Charalambos Alexandrou

*Director of the Department of
Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural
Development and Environment*

Mister Chairman,

Your excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, let me express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Slovak Republic for hosting the 8th Ministerial Conference of FOREST EUROPE, especially under these peculiar conditions, caused by the pandemic.

FOREST EUROPE has been contributing substantially and positively to the forest-related and environmental developments in the pan-European region for the last 30 years. On behalf of the Government of Cyprus, I would like to reaffirm, once more, our strong support to this voluntary high-level political process and to reassure our readiness to work together to strengthen the sustainable forest management in the region and the globe and face all current and future challenges.

And, we all know that today, one of the most tough challenges for forests worldwide is the changing climate and its effects. Scientific evidences continue to prove the escalating worsening of its impacts, with unpredictable and threatening challenges for social security and sustainable development, undermining the vitality and resilience of the environment, including forest ecosystems. Observed changes are faster, greater and more damaging than expected and at rates that exceed the capacity of forest species and ecosystems to adapt.

In Cyprus, these effects are generally related to reoccurring and long-lasting droughts and heat waves, favouring the occurrence and severity of forest fires, insect and disease outbreaks and die-backs of forest stands. Similar, and even more severe effects, occur in the whole pan-European region and the globe.

The potential contribution of forests in mitigating the effects of climate change seems to be widely recognized. However, crucial remains the need to devote tireless efforts to adapt forest ecosystems, their management, as well as forest related societies and economies, to the escalating impacts - either direct or indirect - of climate change.

Cyprus fully perceives the need for urgent and long-lasting actions. We have already set as a key priority of our forest policy to strengthen efforts in order to make local forests less vulnerable, more resilient and adaptive to climate change, while, at the same time, enhancing their mitigating contribution.

In recent years, we have been working on making the forests less vulnerable to wildfires, by actively managing the forest biomass in fire-prone areas, while special care is taken to avoid damages on forest biodiversity. Since 2018, an ongoing process has been initiated for the preparation and implementation of local plans for forest vegetation management, in order to reduce the risk of fires - and mainly, the development of mega-fires. Now, we invest more in precautionary measures and infrastructure and in raising public awareness in order to broaden the protection of forests against fires and other risks.

We work on increasing the resilience of newly established or restored forests against drought and adverse climatic conditions, by promoting species well-adapted to the local, drought conditions, from well selected provenances. Since 2020, we have initiated the governmental scheme "Planting for Climate", by which we provide trees and shrubs to the public, free of charge, for planting, aiming at the expansion of green open areas.

Furthermore, we give more emphasis on

monitoring forest health and vitality to ensure early identification of pest and disease outbreaks.

Mister Chairman,

Your Excellencies, / Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

Although the challenge of adapting pan-European forests to the effects of climate change is principally addressed at local level, there is a need for international and cross-sectoral cooperation, common concerns and aspirations, and joint efforts, in a pro-active approach, at all levels.

Due to the complexity of the implications of climate change, there is an urgent need to remain focused on the holistic approach of Sustainable Forest Management, remaining fully devoted on maintaining its three pillars well balanced. Such a multi-dimensional challenge implies for a strengthened science - policy interface to broaden the knowledge and facilitate well-informed decision making.

In addition, political dialogue should tackle the issue of facilitating financial support of forest adaptation measures.

Concluding my statement, I would like to remind that, this political process has a long and renowned history in tackling difficult forest related challenges. Political willingness and readiness for dedicated cooperation, based on research evidences and knowledge-based common goals, targets and most importantly, actions, have had a vital catalytic role to that end.

We do believe that this is still the way forward.

Thank you for your attention.

European Union

Mr. Janusz Wojciechowski

European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development

Dear Chairman,

Dear ministers and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the European Union, I would like to congratulate the Slovak Republic and Germany for the organisation of this important event. It is a real pleasure and an honour to participate in this 8th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. This conference reflects more than 30 years of fruitful cooperation under the Forest Europe process on the protection and sustainable management of forests.

The subject-matter of this roundtable is of paramount importance. Climate change is happening. The world has just concluded the hottest decade on record during which the title for the hottest year was beaten eight times.

The frequency and severity of climate and weather extremes is increasing. This has caused a surge in the number of disasters over the last two decades. These extremes affect particularly our forests, ranging from unprecedented forest fires over the last decade not only in Mediterranean countries to extensive bark beetle outbreaks in Central and Eastern Europe.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to take action and adapt our forests to the changing climate. Securing the health and resilience of forest ecosystems is crucial for climate, biodiversity, as well as for a resource-efficient and competitive economy with lively rural areas and wealthy rural populations.

The Ministerial Resolution provides a sound and coherent approach to the main challenges we

are facing, and I would like to highlight three main issues:

- First, the need to address adaptation in a holistic and comprehensive way. Adaptation and mitigation are just the two sides of the coin. Adaptation of forests to climate change is crucial for securing the long-term mitigation capacity of our forests.
- Secondly, research, innovation and international cooperation need to be strengthened. We need to step up our efforts to develop science-based forest management approaches. Decision-making and acting in the face of climate uncertainty can be facilitated by anchoring decisions in the latest science. We already have a robust knowledge base for action but further work is needed on adaptation, its costs, benefits and effects. We must also promote the use of digital technologies to underpin decision-making, forest monitoring and risk prevention and management.
- Thirdly, I would also like to stress the need to involve all forest stakeholders in this endeavour. Forest owners, the forest-based industry and the civil society have to be fully involved and participate in the development and implementation of sound adaptation approaches, development of new business models and efficient use of forest resources and the development of the bioeconomy.

We also need better communication with society about the importance of forests and forest-based products in the context of climate change and the objective of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

Finally, dear Chairmen, let me also very briefly refer to the topic of the next session, which is related to the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration, but also relevant to this one. The role of forests for addressing key sustainability objectives has gained enormous attention recently. In this context, and with climate change challenging their viability, it is necessary to reinforce our capacity to show and explain to the society the singularity of our forests and the influence of cultural, historical and demographic factors in shaping them, in order to improve the understanding and empathy of many sectors of the society towards the state of our forests and our vision of sustainable forest management as a key tool for effectively contributing to many sustainable development goals.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Finland

Mr. Jari Leppä

Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

Your excellency president Čaputová, dear ministers, dear colleagues.

I wish to warmly thank Slovakia and Germany for organising this eight ministerial conference. To Finland, the pan-European forest process has always been very important. Every country has the responsibility for its own forests, but this process has provided a political forum to discuss and further develop the concept of sustainable forest management and everything it entails. The panel discussion that we just saw shows that we have chosen well the topic of our ministerial resolution; Adapting forests to changing climate.

Important thing to remember is, that active, sustainable forest management is needed to keep our forests healthy and resilient. Without active management, different forest damage, such as those caused by pests or forest fires, will become even more common. Well-managed forests are less prone to forest damage, grow better, mitigate climate change, safeguard biodiversity and offer good possibilities for recreation.

Silvicultural practices need to be constantly developed to take climate change into account. This is an area where we need more research and experience; which are the silvicultural practices that best help forests to adapt to climate change? This is a new aspect of SFM, and our work continues, as it has continued for decades.

In the resolution, we rightly acknowledge that pests and many other causes of forest damage are transboundary. Risk prevention and early warning systems are essential in safeguarding our forests. For this reason, we strongly support the work towards a pan-European Forest Risk Mechanism. It is an excellent example of work

that should be done together, at pan-European level.

Concerning "how wood-based industry can adapt to changing quality and quantity of wood supplies", I see that the industry is quite flexible, as long as we do not prepare too detailed policies and legislation, which stipulate how and for what purpose the wood should be used.

Finally, dear ministers and colleagues, I wish to assure that Finland is committed to the Forest Europe process. We need to take care of our forests, and we need to do that together.

Thank you very much!

France

Mr. Julien Denormandie

Minister of Agriculture and Food

Good afternoon to each of you, it is a great pleasure to address you at this pan-European ministerial conference of Forest Europe.

We are gathered around an absolutely essential theme: the adaptation of our forests to climate change. The rise in temperatures and the droughts of recent years are signals that should alert us. They create favourable conditions for the increased proliferation of certain pests. We must therefore act now and decisively to increase the resilience of our forests and safeguard jobs in the forestry and wood industries throughout Europe. Forests are real carbon sinks and play a key role in the ecological transition, particularly in achieving our commitments to carbon neutrality by 2050.

This is why we have placed forests at the heart of the French recovery plan. We first worked on a roadmap with all the stakeholders: managers, owners, experts, researchers and NGOs. It is the result of intense and collective work on all aspects, from research to innovation and education. This work serves an ambitious purpose: to plant 50 million trees to increase the planted areas but also to regenerate the existing forests and to reconstitute those that have been damaged. These 50 million trees will make it possible to capture an additional 150,000 tons of CO₂ each year, which is colossal. So, how are we going to achieve this?

First of all, by investing massively in research and innovation. We have chosen to invest in improving our knowledge in this area, in particular through Lidar technology. It will be used throughout France for the next five years.

But also by making a commitment to future generations. I am convinced that to be effective, we must take a long-term view. The forest is

a long term project. That is why I believe it is essential to raise awareness among the younger generations of the challenges of sustainable forest management throughout the European continent. Several educational projects have been launched in France to this end, in particular through the “La forêt s’invite à l’école” (The forest comes to school) operation. These are great ways of passing on this forestry heritage to the generations that will take over the sustainable management of our forests in the future.

Finally, we must move forward by creating a fund for renewal and adaptation of forests to climate change of 150 million euros. It aims to help forest owners, both public and private, to renew and diversify their forests, as well as to support the seed and seedling industry. The challenge is obviously great, but the stakes are so high, we must go forward with great determination with this plan of 150 million euros to renew and diversify our forests.

I also know that I can count on the quality of our cooperation between European States to respond to this challenge. Similarly, I am convinced that the instruments, particularly scientific and financial instruments, managed by the European Commission will be of great help in moving forward collectively. I wanted to say this afternoon that France’s ambition was total. That this implied an involvement in research and innovation, in the long-term and in particular in raising the awareness of the new generations, but also in a determined action for the renewal and diversification of our forests.

I wish you rich and fruitful exchanges on this theme that brings us all together and I say to you: see you soon.

Greece

Mr. Georgios Amyras

Deputy Minister of Environment and Energy

Honorable ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure to participate in this conference and I would like to warmly congratulate the Minister of Slovakia for co-organizing the Eighth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference, under the prevailing conditions of the global pandemic.

It's worth noting the importance of Forest Europe process in promoting Sustainable Forest Management at national and regional levels and of course in taking significant decisions and improving general understanding of how forest ecosystems and their sustainable management and policies can contribute to the transition to a green economy.

As a Mediterranean country with hundreds/thousands of islands, Greece is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. Greece is prone to extreme climate events and regularly experiences heat waves, droughts, floods and forest fires. Decreasing precipitation and rising mean temperatures are already affecting the economy and ecosystems. In recent years, we are already observing various forms of climate change consequences in our country. In the summer of 2018, the Attica fire in Greece was nevertheless among the deadliest worldwide in terms of human casualties.

Although total burned area has decreased in the past decade, wildfire risk is projected to increase in Greece and in Southern Europe in general.

Integration of biodiversity goals in national forestry policy has a relatively long tradition. For more than a century Greece is applying sustainable management practices for logging and grazing and has adopted strong legal

protection for forests and woodlands. In recent years we are updating our forest policy and trying to strengthen our forests' resilience.

The National Forest Strategy, adopted for 2018-38, represents a big step towards implementing sustainable forest management and strengthening the multifunctional role of forest ecosystems.

Sustainable forest management provides a sound conceptual framework for building resilience.

To increase resilience of forests and trees to climate change through management of forests:

- We establish a national forest inventory system;
- We implement a national reforestation plan in order to plant more than 30.000.000 trees in the next decade;
- We adopt new technical specifications for the development;
- We publishing new guidelines to develop forest fire protection plans for each forest service station in the country.

Forests with their multiple environmental, economic and social services are essential to life on earth and all together have to work more on the adaptation of forest to climate change.

Thank you for your attention.

Hungary

Mr. István Nagy

Minister of Agriculture

Dear mister Chairman, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is hardly questionable that climate change and related adaptation have been the most prominent challenge of forest management in the last hundred years. Principles of sustainable and multifunctional forest management commonly elaborated in the framework of Forest Europe, and diverse national practices, remain the solid basis to manage, maintain and protect forests and improve their capacity for adaptation. As experienced in the last decades, the speed of climate change is well beyond the potential of biological adaptation capacity of forests, therefore, active forest management based on scientific knowledge and capable to integrate practical experiences and to dynamically adapt to the changing natural conditions is especially important.

Expectations towards forest ecosystem services in terms of climate and biodiversity protection and recreation, have become more and more decisive in the recent decades, often to be achieved through significant restriction or termination of management activities. Where management activities are restricted due to well-grounded reasons for such a headline target, compensation of financial losses must be ensured. Where conditions allow, we consider monitoring natural processes, as well as their professional support as a priority, however, they are not sufficient per se to maintain forest stands. The reliable solution is a plan-based forest management incorporating long-term goals with due attention to site and ecosystem conditions, whereby forests and their services can be preserved and maintained

with management activities tailored to local conditions.

We consider sustainable forest management and the role of forestry professionals as integrators as crucial; they should harmonize social demands with realistic and long-term practical solutions through their professional knowledge. National fora can and should be strengthened by the initiatives of the forestry community. The Forest Europe process can share experiences at an international level and strengthen the coordinated dialog among society, stakeholders and foresters.

We support international knowledge exchange related to forest disturbances and recovery measures, the fora of which can be quickly and effectively established in the frame of the Pan-European knowledge mechanism, however, we consider the effective prevention of forest damages as a greater challenge. Adaptation measures are subject to site conditions, based on national practices and local traditions, and therefore require special care. We intend to pay special attention to this area in our future actions.

At the Madrid Ministerial Conference, Hungary proposed to improve forest monitoring activities in order to collect more reliable and harmonized information related to climate change. We are especially satisfied that this proposal has been incorporated into the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration to be signed here.

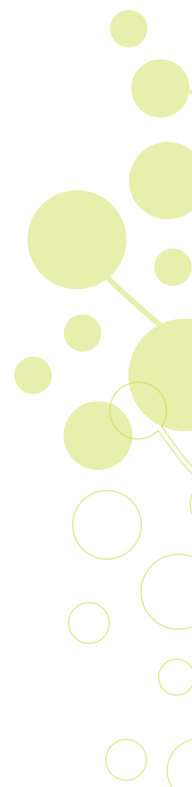
We are disappointed to see the lack of consensus among European Forests Signatories to resume negotiations on the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the experts involved in the preparation of the

documents to be adopted at this conference. Hungary agrees with the contents of the documents and supports their adoption.

Finally, I would like to thank the Slovak Government and the German Government for the organisation of the Eighth Ministerial Conference, as well as the Liaison Unit Bratislava for their high quality work carried out in the wake of the Madrid Conference and I wish every success to the Liaison Unit Bonn.

Thank you for your attention!



Ireland

Ms. Pippa Hackett

Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity

On behalf of the Irish Government and as Minister of State with responsibility for Forestry I am delighted to acknowledge and support the excellent work of Forest Europe. I would like to thank the organisers for their hard work in preparing this 8th Ministerial conference which continues to build on the successes of the first conference in 1990.

The topic before us today is the challenge of adapting forests to a changing climate, I wanted to show Ireland's support for the Ministerial resolutions and declarations that we will sign tomorrow.

The world's forests play an important role in regulating our climate but they are also vulnerable to the impacts of rising temperatures. Climate change will continue to have significant impacts across many habitats and species.

The role of forests in removing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and combined with other actions across the globe will be crucial in achieving climate neutrality by 2050. But this will only occur if we have forests that are resilient and can adapt to a changing climate.

Because impacts from climate change are real.

In Ireland, we can see that spring is occurring earlier than it did in the 1970s and the incidence of frosts are decreasing. And across Europe, we can see the devastating impacts of the spread of bark beetle on our forests.

In Ireland, we have also experienced an increased incidence of some diseases, and particularly striking is the impact of ash dieback disease. Although this disease is not directly associated with climate change it is having a similar impact on our landscape and ash in particular has a special

place in Irish cultural and sporting heritage.

Supporting science and technology is crucial to managing the impact of diseases, and also for restoring forests impacted by climate change.

In Ireland, we have recently published a Climate Adaptation Plan and a strategy for the Sustainable Development and Conservation of forest genetic resources. These plans are important and bring together existing knowledge and expertise to chart a path to identify the likely risks and adaptation strategies for the future.

I must also stress the importance of the need to continue to monitor plant health and support the work of national forest inventories. Monitoring at the national and European level will be crucial in providing the data to drive and inform forest policy into the future.

National Forestry programmes are also an essential enabler to delivering on national strategies. In Ireland, we are incentivising the planting of a range of tree species for a range of purposes- from timber production, to enhancing water quality, and indeed to supporting biodiversity and habitat creation.

We recognise the importance of the need to increase species diversity and management systems.

As Minister with responsibility for Forestry, I have established a new initiative called "Project Woodland" which will include the development of a new Irish Forest Strategy. This will be developed in conjunction with a broad range of stakeholders-including those from the forest industry, environmentalists, state agencies, farmers, and community groups.

This new strategy will strengthen our vision for

forestry and chart a new path for our forests in a changing climate, and in a time of changing societal demands.

We also need to recognise the importance of using wood when produced from sustainably managed forests. Timber, and the growing bioeconomy will play an ever-increasing role in locking up carbon and replacing materials made from non-renewable fossil fuels. However, climate change also has the capacity to disrupt the regular flow of timber and we have seen market fluctuations due to increases in salvage felling due to pests and diseases. These events require forest owners and markets to adapt and we must work with all stakeholders to find solutions to deal with these events.

Forests are such an intrinsic part of our landscape that we must cherish for future generations.

In our capacity as Ministers, and the citizens that we represent, we must provide the conditions for leadership, be visionary in our approach, and encourage collaboration across society.

We know that our forests are vulnerable to climate change.

Individually we do not have all the answers, but if we continue to work collectively, we can develop shared solutions that will build a more resilient landscape and a brighter and greener future for all of our forests, and for all the people and species who depend on them.

Thank you.



Italy

Mr. Stefano Patuanelli

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies

Ongoing climate change is having a profound impact on our daily lives as well as on terrestrial and marine ecosystems and our economies.

Italy, as a country located in the center of the Mediterranean, is particularly exposed to these changes and is subject to the occurrence of climatic phenomena, sometimes extreme, which have a palpable impact on the life and social organization of citizens.

In this worrying framework, the role of forests takes on an unprecedented relevance due to their ability to show down the negative effects of climate change favoring their mitigation and relative adaptation. As an example, Italy experienced the first real windstorm in recent years (called Vaia) which destroyed thousands of hectares of forests in the Eastern Alps and whose damage was felt by the entire forestry sector. The phenomenon of forest fires, unfortunately well known in the Mediterranean area, has also seen an increase in the frequency of terrible years due to recorded virulence of the phenomenon. The consequences of these events also lead to the development of major parasitic attacks such as those by Bostrich, already experienced in Central European countries. The new policy of the European Union, represented by the Green Deal and accentuated by the recent policies adopted to contain the Covid19 pandemic, place natural environments, biodiversity and forests in particular, at the centre of a new idea of sustainable development as outlined in the United Nation 2030 Agenda. This is a policy in which Italy firmly committed to achieving its objectives.

In recent years, Italy has published the new

framework law on forests and forest supply chains, which aims to enhance their value, taking into account all the forest eco-systemic services and focusing on the sustainable forest management (SFM) as developed by the processes of Forest Europe.

As a result of these issues, we are finalizing the new national forestry strategy, which will be published at the end of this year, and which will enable us to align with the new post-2020 EU Forestry Strategy, which is derived from the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030, published last year by the European Commission.

In this context, I would like to underline the appreciation of the Italian Government for the work carried out by Forest Europe and today I confirm Italy's commitment and active participation to future activities, hoping to soon reap positive results in the care and sustainable management of European forests.

Luxembourg

Ms. Carole Dieschbourg

Minister of Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development

Dear colleagues,

Faced with the uncertainty of the magnitude and frequency of the effects of climate change on forests, Luxembourg supports forest owners to favor the precautionary principle by strengthening the biodiversity of forest ecosystems, because diversity is the essential ingredient of greater resilience.

In order to enhance biodiversity and resilience in private forest, we increased our aid to forest owners for

- the restoration of degraded forests and forest biotopes
- the conversion of monocultures into structured mixed forests,
- the adaptation of tree species to local conditions
- the protection of forest soils.

In public forests, we systematically apply close to nature silviculture, making the best use of natural structures and processes and assuring a permanent forest cover, including an objective of at least 5% of non-intervention forests. Wood harvesting has been reduced to a maximum of 60% of the natural increment in semi-natural broad leaf forests.

We also try to create enabling conditions for better forest resilience by cross-sectorial actions. Our best example is the achievement of a better forest-game balance by enforcing minimum hunting plans and a total prohibition of game feeding ; in fact, high densities of game reduce the diversity of regenerations through selective browsing, and have therefore a strong negative impact on the adaptive capacity of forests.

Concerning the wood-based sector, Luxembourg is running an innovative wood cluster initiative since the year 2018 with a special focus on wood

construction. The objective is to adapt the sector to improved sustainability and circular economy standards, while contributing to the mitigation of climate change.

But above all, we will establish in 2021 a payment system for ecosystem services for resilient forests. A premium of 150 euros will be granted per hectare and per year and can be upgraded to 250 euros in the Natura 2000 network. The forest stands benefiting from the premium must have at least fifty percent of native hardwood trees. Close to nature silviculture has to be applied and the biodiversity of the forests must be favored by maintaining a minimum of old and dead trees. This payment system should make it possible to maintain the supply of all essential services in these forests (biodiversity, CO2 storage, water protection, air filtering, social benefits) and reduce the intensity of logging which was previously necessary to ensure profitability, hence the possibility of improving the mitigation effect of forests, which is also a contribution to short-term adaptation. We would be happy to share our and other experiences on paying for forest ecosystem services with partners and countries within Forest Europe because I am convinced that paying for ecosystem services will be essential for fighting climate change.

In order to prepare for long-term adaptation Luxembourg participates in the pan-European EUFORGEN network to identify and monitor the genetic diversity and adaptation potential of forest trees.

Dear colleagues,

Despite scientific advances, adapting forests and the forest sector to climate change is above all a matter of changing mentalities and good coordination and support of a multitude of initiatives.

Malta

Mr. Joseph Caruana

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planting

Thank you Chair for facilitating discussions on the importance of forestry and offer us the opportunity to share our experiences.

Despite the very limited presence of forest in our country, we still recognise that forestry can play an important function in enhancing our climate change resilience and even facilitate the restoration of biodiversity and natural ecosystems.

We remain committed to fully value such resources, to attain the implementation of targets emanating from our National Biodiversity Strategy, and Action Plan and our forthcoming National Strategy and Action Plan on Tress and Woodlands. This Strategy will serve as a national policy driver to promote trees and woodlands and further integrate forestation and restoration concerns into the plans, programmes and policies of related sectors in Malta. It will also contribute at improving the status of tree and woodland species and their genetic diversity by reducing various direct and indirect pressures and threats affecting their range and distribution, and hence their prospects.

The protection of our natural resources and forest from the effects of climate change remain an important area of action. We believe that resilience and adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems can be enhanced by for example taking stock of local genetic indigenous species, promoting mixed forest by avoiding monocultures, as well as implementing ecosystem-based approaches that promote soil stability and water retention.

In this vein, we remain committed to protect our environmental resources, valuing and promoting nature-based solutions, upkeep and maintain national parks and embellishment of other public spaces, maximise green infrastructure, and protect our ecosystem services, so to reduce

pollution and so protect the health of our citizens.

Despite our clear limitations due to our small parcel land sizes and densely populated territory resulting in a tightly knit urban and rural urban areas, we are committed to implement initiatives, which entail afforestation and planting of trees, which can facilitate the regeneration of biodiversity, particularly our indigenous species and habitat restoration.

Hence, we have recently improved the management of our natural parks by addressing capacity building. We have successfully introduced the notions of park rangers for the first time. Now we have a team of rangers, which is working together with our scientific team on Natura 2000 sites, rural areas, and the development of green infrastructures.

This initiative will complement various green initiatives and projects, including monitoring of environmental rehabilitation projects, the monitoring of planted trees and initiatives to control of invasive species, together with strong enforcement and protection of our sites.

Moreover, we also remain committed to continue our efforts and increase public awareness on the value of nature on our quality of lives. We are continuously promoting interaction with the public, as well as cooperate with local environmental NGOs and stakeholders, in the collection of geographic data to continue building knowledge and capacity. We are focusing on invasive and non-native species, fly-tipping, as well as illegal activities and be able to develop policies and action to mitigate such occurrences and their impact on our natural resources.

Mr Chair, I wish to thank you for this opportunity and augur successful discussions through this important event.

Portugal

Mr. João Pedro Matos Fernandes

*Minister of Environment and
Climate Action*

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our forests face many challenges and, for sure, climate change is among the major challenges ones. Since the early start of this ministerial process, back in 1990, this has been a topic of paramount importance in the ministerial agenda. Nevertheless, despite our efforts, the urgency to tackle climate change has only increased. Therefore, the theme of this conference and the documents we are about to sign are crucial, timely scheduled and inspiring.

On this occasion let me highlight Portugal's commitment to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 and underline the relevance that forests play as an important component of our roadmap towards that goal.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have to be mutually supportive and we should promote synergies between them. When it comes to forests this is of outmost importance, as climate change may affect their sink capacity. In this regard, our efforts should be focused on reinforcing sustainable forest management, through a flexible approach based on the best and up-to-date scientific knowledge, to manage, conserve and sustainable develop all types of forests. Forests' adaptation to climate change cannot be seen as an isolated component of forest management but rather as one of its building blocks.

We must increase our efforts towards a more resilient forest. Due to the long-life cycle of forests, waiting for forest ecosystems to adjust naturally to climate change may entail unbearable costs in all

dimensions – economic, social and environmental. So, it is urgent to identify techniques which ensure a faster adaptation in order to avoid the risk of losing natural capital and the multiple benefits of the forests. Working together, within the scope of the Forest Europe Process and in cooperation with relevant international organisations, and stakeholders is the way forward.

The Portuguese experience is based on the search for innovative ways to address the multiple risks of climate change. Thus, we have been reframing and adjusting our forest policy instruments as well as their governance having climate change and the subsequent adaptation of the forest sector as the main driving forces of the revision and extension of our forest-related legislation, plans and programs.

I would like to draw your attention to some of the main measures.

The revision of Regional Forest Management Programs where climate scenarios were applied to identify which species will be better adapted, in the future, to the new climate parameters. This approach is now supporting the forest owner's choices in their forest management plans as well as afforestation and reforestation projects.

We also have developed a new National Integrated Fire Management Plan, where we address the use of fire by the population, especially for grazing, the professional use of fire in prevention and in fire management itself and a reinforcement of the governance of the fire prevention system.

We are also working with all relevant actors to improve the land use planning at landscape level, while promoting stronger territorial cohesion. We target territories that present vulnerabilities, with

a view to preventing risks and adapting to climate change.

Allow me to emphasize another aspect of utmost importance to the Mediterranean countries which is the impact of climate change on water resources. Climate change scenarios clearly point out for increasing droughts and water scarcity, leading to an increased risk of desertification. These effects are already felt in our country are no longer seen as extraordinary events. Once again forests, due to their positive role on the regulation of the water cycle and water quality, are nature-based solutions that we strongly seek to promote in desertification prone zones.

Finally, distinguished colleagues and participants, I conclude reaffirming Portugal's commitment to work together with all of you to enhance forests' resilience to adapt to climate change. As Portugal is now holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, I would also like to invite you to the Webinar that we are organising in May "on Restoring Europe's Forests".

Thank you

Romania

Mr. Barna Tánczos

Minister of Environment, Water and Forests

Your excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to express my sincere appreciation and congratulate the Slovak Republic for organizing the 8th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference, especially in these challenging times generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding a common agreement on the actions we have to perform today for a better tomorrow, many times is a demanding task!

Romania supports the Forest Europe process, as part of European and global efforts to adapt and reduce climate change impact.

Our forestry system promotes natural types of forests and also natural regeneration by using local species and provenances, such as local genetic material that is adapted both to local site conditions and climate. Currently, mixed naturally-regenerated stands are promoted as they are more stable and resilient to the climate change effects.

Romanian forests have been spared from heavy impacts due to climate change compared to forests across Western and Central Europe, where there have been severe damages made mainly by bark beetles attacks, drought, forest fires, windstorms and invasive species.

We understood that nature gave us important lessons!

Therefore, the support of science is definitely needed to better understand how species will migrate both in terms of latitude and altitude based on existing climate scenarios. Multi-disciplinary research, such as the ones that combine the genetic approaches, ecological

characteristics of forest tree species and climate change scenarios, were recently done across Europe and, also in Romania.

We, as political decision-makers, have the responsibility to take science-based decisions having in mind how the future might look like in terms of climate and society expectations related to forests.

It is well known that forests play a key role also in carbon sequestration. Thus, our goal is to increase the forest area in Romania, especially in those parts that are vulnerable to climate change, for example in the southern part of the country, where desertification represents a major threat. Significant steps were done in the last two decades, thousands of sandy soils being forested. We plan to continue this initiative and to establish a real green barrier in order to stop the spread of desertification.

Afforestation with tree and shrub species that will rapidly adapt to the changing climate, represents the most cost-effective solution in fighting climate change! We are interested to share best practices and knowledge because we believe that together we are stronger in fighting climate change! Transboundary and cross-sector cooperation is mandatory!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the time to give more attention to the forest as a whole, as a complex ecosystem that should not be significantly disturbed. It is also mandatory to develop and implement the best solutions related to wood processing in order to increase the value of the wood-based products.

Also, let's not forget about forestry education and awareness! Forests should be regarded as

vital contributors to our daily life, considering their importance worldwide, in sustaining and increasing the quality of life, in preserving biodiversity and reducing pollution. It is estimated that the lives of 1.2-1.4 billion people are directly depended on forests (for shelter, food, revenue etc.).

We believe that strong partnerships both on local scale, and also on European level between policy makers, forest owners, foresters, scientists, NGOs, and other stakeholders will be important aspects in order to find the best solutions for adapting pan-European forests to climate change!

Considering the afore mentioned reasons, it is my strong belief that the Ministerial Declaration “The Future We Want: The Forests We Need” and the Ministerial Resolution on adapting pan-European forests to climate change, represent important stepping stones for the future forestry actions to be taken at multilateral level.

Thank you for your attention!

Slovak Republic

Mr. Ján Mičovský

*Minister of Agriculture and Rural
Development*

Distinguished ministers,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to start expressing my gratitude for your contribution and I would like to enrich our discussion with two remarks, that Slovakia consider as important. The first one is linked with the commonly used term in this Conference: Sustainable forest management. This concept is really important and it expresses our selflessness, our respect for forests, our efforts to do everything for forests that they can make genetically encoded well, our humility and hope, but especially our responsibility for our descendants to inherit the forests in the same or even a better condition than we received them.

When it comes to sustainable management, we cannot carry out any operation without a tool of high quality. If a surgeon wants to make heart transplantation, he needs adequate instruments and with this example I would like to point out to European forests, our steps must lead to new heart for them and help them. In order to handle such operation, it is necessary to have the top-level tools, which is in my view, the concept of close to nature forest management.

Europe has developed this concept through complex historical developments – from unregulated clearcutting, to reforestation of regulated clear-cut areas, gradually moving to natural regeneration through undergrowth management methods. The continuing development led us to the superior tool called close to nature forest management, which we believe, is the way paved for forest management of the 21st century, and with this instrument we can get through the challenges ahead. Let me

make clear, that it might not be the only tool but it provides resilient, stable forests with their beauty and productivity.

Dear Colleagues,

Close to nature forest management is the answer for stable and productive forests in its full complexity. Wood is not the paramount or superior forest product, but water, air, soil, recreation are also of supreme importance. This brings me to my second remark: complex forest production, which is also needs to be supported. Complex forest production must be supported politically, economically and by education. Even in Slovakia with its rich forestry history not everyone is convinced about this approach so we must demonstrate that this a way forward.

As we support sustainable forest management, it is time to also provide support for close to nature forest management, it is the way to make everyone rich in Europe and to have healthy, stable and beautiful country, country which can handle the climate change.

Forests cannot be compared to a bank, where we withdraw money; forests are an insurance company for our healthy future to which investments are needed.

Thank you!

Spain

Ms. Teresa Ribera Rodríguez

4th Vice President of the Government and Minister for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge

It is with great pleasure that I send my short message to this very important Conference.

Sometimes, we forget to what extent counting on healthy forests is an important issue for our wealth, for our life, for our people, for our children. To count on fresh water, fresh air, healthy soils, rich biodiversity, relies on the type of forests, and the type of management of our forestry that we face and we enforce. And sometimes we forget that there are different kinds of forests, but all of them are very important in order to provide these services.

This ecosystemic approach to forests is key: intelligent, wise practices when dealing with forests; understanding how they work, what type of interrelation we have with forests, and what type of interrelations within the same forest ecosystem is quite important for any of us. This is why I think that the Bratislava Resolution is quite an important piece in order to ensure that proper policies are taken into consideration: science-based solutions; understanding how they react; assessing how best, how fast we can improve the care and the proper management of our forests is absolutely key.

When we talk about forests in the Mediterranean areas, we are thinking of marvellous species, but also about the great impact of Climate Change in our environment, including wildfires. So we know that we have very important values in front of us, that we need to keep, we need to preserve. But at the same time, we need to handle different situations with very important risks ahead of us. This is why I think that the strong cooperation within the different sectoral policies is important. This is why we think that taking into consideration

forests when dealing with domestic policies, but also with the external dimension of forests is key in order to succeed. The protection, the good management, the good practices, but also the better understanding and the promotion of a proper aim in order to preserve our forests will be key in the times to come.

Congratulations, Germany and Slovakia, for this very interesting proposal and please, count on Spain: we count on our forests and we count on our common effort to preserve them.

Switzerland

Mr. Michael Reinhard

Head of the Forest Division, Federal Office for the Environment

"No mitigation without adaptation - Switzerland's approach to secure the multiple benefits of forests in a changing climate"

Ladies and gentlemen, honorable ministers, dear colleagues

I would like to share with you how Switzerland addresses and promotes the adaptation of forests to climate change through close-to nature forests and sustainable and multi-functional forest management.

In the mountainous ecosystems of Switzerland, the multiplication of droughts and high temperatures- the impacts of climate change- could gravely disrupt or even destroy essential forest services. These include crucial protection from avalanches, rock fall, mudslides or flooding.

Our forest adaptation research program predicts that the gradual consequences of climate change will lead to a drastic displacement of zones of vegetation from 500 meters to 700 meters by 2080. For example, many coniferous forests, which today grow at lower altitudes, will be replaced by deciduous forests. On the ground, climate change is happening so quickly that it compromises the natural adaptation of multifunctional forests and therefore the forest services that may be available.

Ten years ago, these observations by Swiss forest scientists were the trigger for taking up the topic of adaptation of forests to climate change, at both scientific and political levels, in documents including the current Forest Policy, the National Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan, and the revised Federal Forest Law.

The Swiss parliament revised the Forest Law in

2016, recognizing that early adaptation is far more economically sensible than restoration of damages. An additional 20 million Swiss Francs per annum - continuing financing which started in 2018 - will support forest owners for targeted tending of their forests. This finances both regeneration of protective forests and rejuvenation programs to influence species composition adapted to climate change so that the Confederation can guarantee that forest ecosystems will provide their services also in the future. Results of multi-year research are easily accessible online to forest experts. Experimental planting of climate-adapted tree species has been initiated and will be analyzed.

Recently, and starting from 2021, additional funding of 25 million Swiss Francs per annum has been agreed by the Swiss parliament for supporting forest owners in establishing resilient and adapted forests.

Ladies and gentlemen - this means in a nutshell:

- Forest owners, forest managers and government agencies are lobbyists and ambassadors for forests. They must inform on the risks pertaining to forests and ensure that the forest adaptation needs are integrated into climate-relevant political processes at international and national level.
- Forests must be adapted to climate change, otherwise their mid-and long term forest services will be endangered and their benefits to society will be reduced if not lost. No mitigation without adaptation!

Thank you very much

Turkey

Mr. Bekir Pakdemirli

Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

Distinguished ministers,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to start expressing my gratitude to address you, on the margin of this high-level meeting on forests.

I believe that each and every step for the protection of forests matters for nature, humanity, and all living creatures on earth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Besides the effects of the Covid-19, we have another important global problem.

Today, the impacts of climate change are beyond the estimations or projections, as a matter of fact, it is a part of daily life.

Frankly speaking, the things we did and we didn't, cause climate change.

However, it is still possible to reduce its harmful effects before it is too late. Therefore, the trees, woodlands, and forests are the areas that we should protect and manage properly.

Deforestation, degradation of ecosystems and forest fires are the main challenges that we are facing and we should respond quickly and effectively.

Within this perspective, Turkey has a Strategic Plan for Climate Change Adaptation of Forestry which assists decision-makers to build up sustainably managed and resilient forests.

Therefore, Turkey takes bold actions at the policy and practice level by harmonizing scientific information in sustainable forest management.

As a result of dedication in this area, Turkey is the leading country in Europe for an average annual net gain in forest area for the last decade. This is also highlighted by FAO in the Global Forest

Resources Assessment Report 2020.

To increase the forest value of our country, we have planted a total of 5.24 billion saplings in the last 20 years, and we aim to reach to plant 7 billion saplings by 2023.

Therefore, seed production activities continue and our production has increased by 7% compared to last year, with 274 million saplings and 144 tons of seeds this year.

Besides, I am very pleased to mention our national awareness-raising Campaign, "Breathe for the Future". In 2019, November 11 was declared as "the National Afforestation Day" by our President and 13.8 million saplings were planted in one day.

Also, this Campaign broke the Guinness world record by planting the maximum number of saplings within an hour.

Last year, even the pandemic, this national initiative was transformed into an international campaign in 2020 with the participation of 25 countries.

Even though Turkey plants almost 300 million saplings each year, this campaign created an incredible ownership among our citizens.

I would like to invite you all to join the occasion on the 11th of November in your own countries

Dear Participants,

I would like to bring your attention to another important issue as well... Forest fires.

Regarding the last 10-year forest fire data of the EFFIS annual report 2019, Turkey has less burned forest area per fire, compared to other Mediterranean countries.

During the forest fires, we have started to use

UAVs to detect the location to respond early and effectively.

This year 234 fires have been detected with UAV's. By this way, we were able to respond to fires within 12 minutes. Our new focus is to reduce the response time to 10 minutes by 2023.

On the other hand, we have provided aerial support to 34 forest fires in 10 different countries. We have the world's largest forest fire extinguishing helicopter, MI 26, in our aerial fleet.

Considering the importance of early response to forest fires, an International Forestry Training Center which is located on Mediterranean coast, in Antalya, was established to enhance national and regional capacity.

Many projects have been implemented together with FAO in Central Asian and African countries regarding forestation, land restoration and forest-related climate change adaptation activities.

One of our projects which addresses forest management in the Mediterranean Region, accepted as a good practice in Global Environment Facility (GEF) project portfolio in 2019.

Distinguished Participants,

We have to be aware of the importance of regional and global cooperation for environmental issues.

Turkey attaches importance to the creation of global synergies by sharing experiences, best practices, and knowledge with other countries on relevant platforms.

We believe that the platforms of UN conventions, UN organizations, and Forest Europe are efficient bodies for policy dialogues, technical discussions, and intergovernmental cooperation.

As Turkey, we are ready for being a hub in the Mediterranean Region to combat forest fires with our current infrastructure.

Here, I would like to offer a new collaboration for all the member countries.

Dear Colleagues,

We are continuing to our efforts for contributing to the goals of UN Conventions, and Sustainable Development Goals.

And, Turkey supports the Pan-European perspective of Forest Europe today, as it was yesterday.

I believe this meeting will lead us to further concrete actions for forests and climate change adaptation.

By this opportunity I urge all of you to seriously consider establishing a Mediterranean Forest Fire Union

Now I would like to share a short video regarding forestry operations in Turkey

Thank you.

*EOS - European Confederation of the Sawmill Industry***Ms. Silvia Melegari***Secretary General*

The European Sawmill Industries only process legal wood originated from sustainable managed forests in Europe. Overall, over 95% of the wood used by the EU sawmills comes from EU forests, while the remaining less than 5% is imported from geographical European forests. For this reason, any changes occurred in the European forests will have an undeniable impact on our sector.

Climate change is increasing the number and severity of forest disturbances due to extreme weather events. According to a recent study (Emergent vulnerability to climate-driven disturbances in European forests) 33.4 billion tonnes of forest biomass could be seriously affected by disturbances, with higher relative losses when exposed to windthrows (40%) and fires (34%) compared to insect outbreaks (26%).

How to adapt forests to climate change represents a priority for the European Sawmill Industries; without an effective, coherent and coordinated strategy, the European sawmills will face challenges in terms of quality of wood; quantity of wood; accessibility of wood; and utilization of secondary species. Changes in wood supply or in the relative competitiveness of local timber industries may have significant impacts on local economies, particularly in cases in which those economies are heavily dependent on the forest products sector. For this reason, the Sawmill Industry believes that is urgent to increase the support to sustainable forest management and to increase the resilience and long-term stability of European forests and related ecosystem services. Also, the European sawmill industry would like to remind that healthy forests and selling wood are intimately connected as income from wood is essential for forest owners to invest in sustainable forest management

In doing so, Members States and policy makers have the opportunity to design and implement strategies that help forest owners, public land

managers and the forest products industry to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change on forest goods and services and continue to provide sustainable green products.

In particular, the sawmill industries consider the following actions as necessary:

- Climate change has implications for both current and future timber supply. It is necessary to estimate the net impact of climate change on timber supply, i.e.: analysing the impacts of climate change on forest land area, growth rate, disturbance patterns, management inputs, regulatory constraints, regeneration success, and species composition. Because the presence of the sawmill industries is a key factor in the sustainable forest management, it should be taken into account how the timber industries will potentially be affected by changes in global markets resulting from climate change.
- Increase nursery capacity to ensure adequate access to and production of a diverse suite of conservation-grade tree seedlings for reforestation and afforestation strategies, particularly species considered climate "winners." At the same time, it is necessary to take into consideration industries needs (meaning which species are the most used by the Industry);
- Assess afforestation opportunities in light of new science but also evolving markets and in doing so, favouring the collaboration amongst interested stakeholders groups;
- Develop markets for the use of forests and industrial residuals and encourage the production of long-lived woody products, including innovative engineered-wood products as construction materials. A mechanism should be put in place to fully recognise the carbon capture of wood products and the material substitution effect.

CEPF - Confederation of European Forest Owners
COPA - COGECA
EUSTAFOR - European State Forest Association

Joint statement

On behalf of European farmers and agri-cooperatives, private forest owners and state forest organisations, we would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to present our views today.

We wholeheartedly support the choice made to discuss these two topics at this Ministerial Conference, as they are the most relevant for our sector. In addition, we welcome the recommendations made by the Forest Europe Expert Group on adaptation to climate change.

Today, besides the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change is the greatest challenge that humankind, forest owners and managers included, face. Forests are seriously affected by storms, droughts and insect infestations. In addition, climate conditions and changes in land use have increasingly made the forests in many parts of Europe more vulnerable to fire. As climate change is expected to increase the likelihood of fires, the risk of forest fires is predicted to increase if no major actions are undertaken.

At the same time, the European Green Deal, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the climate mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement, as well as other international commitments and initiatives, recognise the crucial role of forests and the forest-based sector in reaching their objectives.

However, in today's policy-making we witness major efforts to promote and consider growing forests exclusively as carbon sinks and storage. Nonetheless, if they are actively and professionally managed, forests can act as everlasting sinks, playing their role in substituting fossil-based materials and energy and in the carbon storage in harvested wood products.

Therefore, only promoting the use of forests as

carbon sinks is not an appropriate measure to combat climate change but rather a high-risk strategy.

The entire forest cycle and the numerous ecological and socio-economic services that forests provide must be considered. This is essential to increase the resilience of our forests and their potential to absorb and store CO₂, to guarantee clean water and air, to deliver renewable climate-friendly solutions for a bio-based economy and to contribute to viable rural areas.

While we are strongly committed to continuing to actively and sustainably manage our forests and to ensure their multifunctional role, this is not enough to maintain the viability of the sector. It is important that all pan-European, EU and national forest-related policies, including the future EU Forest Strategy as the main framework for our sector at EU level, promote effective technical, scientific and policy cooperation, as well as coherent policy tools and adequate funding for adaptation, to ensure healthy and resilient European forests.

Moreover, to effectively tackle climate change challenges in our forests and to better adapt, we think it is essential to continue R&I efforts to strengthen the exchange of best practices among regions and countries and to disseminate this knowledge to the practitioners.

We hope that our views will be granted your full consideration in future work. We will continue to support and be involved in Forest Europe's activities and in the actions on a coordinated pan-European forest risk knowledge mechanism.



Ministerial Roundtable 2:

Sustainable forest management – our joint answer to the vision of sustainable development

Forests are among the world's most productive land-based ecosystems and are essential to life on earth. 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, 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.

Following statements are originals provided by signatories and observers and have not undergone the language editing.

Austria

Ms. Elisabeth Köstinger

*Federal Minister of Agriculture,
Regions and Tourism*

Distinguished ministers,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to meet virtually at the Ministerial Conference 30 years after Forest Europe was founded.

The sustainability and multifunctionality of forests are still the top priority in Austria.

Forest policy as a whole, as well as active, sustainable forest management in particular, should be a central concern of all of us.

Our forest owners and all partners along the entire wood value chain make a significant contribution to safeguard our forests through continuous management and innovative processing.

This not only contributes to the direct creation of value but also to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We all know that forests can be used in a wide variety of ways.

We try to unite these different interests in Austria and at the same time further develop the careful management of our forest.

That is why we started a national Forest Dialogue in Austria in 2003, which involves 85 different stakeholder organizations.

This dialogue offers the ideal platform for an open exchange with all those involved and in turn creates positive multipliers for the forest.

I will continue to promote this successful platform in the future.

The entire forest based sector makes an important contribution to almost all SDGs. For example:

- Forests reduce susceptibility to extreme climatic events.

- Forests have a positive effect on rainwater infiltration and drinking water quality.
- In addition, sustainable forest management and the whole forest based sector offer an alternative to a fossil-based economy. This also creates opportunities for new jobs.

We see the inseparable connection between forests and the diverse areas of life.

I cannot emphasize enough:

The forest is not just a recreational area, it is also an economic livelihood for many.

In Austria, for example, around 80% of the forest area is privately owned.

But the forest also has the unique characteristic of binding CO₂.

Climate change, pests and storms have caused devastating damages in recent years, also in Austria.

The forest needs our help, today more than ever!

That is why I have launched Austria's largest investment package for our forests. We are making a total of 350 million € available in our Forest Fund.

The Forest Fund is a rescue package AND a package for the future of our forests!

Every euro that we invest in our forests is a sustainable investment in the future!

The fund focuses on measures such as reforestation and maintenance after damaging events or the research and development of climate-smart, resilient forests.

The promotion of biodiversity in the forest is also a key element.

Special measures to compensate for bark beetle

damage or forest fire prevention, for example, have also been integrated.

We are increasingly relying on wood as a raw material.

To this end, we support innovative applications of nature-based solutions with the Austrian Wood Initiative.

You can see that a lot of what we have planned or already implemented in Austria perfectly coincides with the goals of Forest Europe.

I am therefore particularly pleased to be able to sign the Declaration and Resolution today.

And I am convinced that the Forest Europe Process is still a highly important mechanism for pan-European exchange even 30 years after it was founded.

Before I come to the end, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Slovakia and to you, Minister Jan Mičovsky, for all your efforts as chairman and for organizing this conference.

And I wish you, dear Minister Julia Klöckner, and the entire German team every success for the next few years. You can count on the support of Austria.

Thank you very much and all the best!



Bulgaria

Ms. Desislava Taneva

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Dear Mr Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the Eight FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference. I would like to express my highest appreciation for your efforts to organize it.

The Republic of Bulgaria attaches great importance to the effective efforts for implementation of the EU Forest Strategy 2013-2020, as well as to the achievement of the global goals for sustainable development under the "UN Strategic Plan for Forests", adopted in 2017.

Forests are the greatest natural wealth of Bulgaria, an integral part of the history and culture of the Bulgarian society. Their sustainable management is guaranteed by the Forest Act, which does not allow the reduction of the forest territory in the country. Over 55% of the Bulgarian forests are included in the ecological network Natura 2000 and are managed in accordance with specially developed regimes, preserving to the maximum extent the characteristic features of the ecosystems.

The implementation of the National Strategy for Development of the Forest Sector 2013-2020 represents the national contribution to achieving the objectives of the EU Forest Strategy 2013-2020 for sustainable forest management and effective development of the forest sector in the European Union.

Over the last eight years, the overall size of the forest areas in Bulgaria has increased by 4.5 % compared to 2013. According to the inventory of forest territories, the forest areas with protective and special functions have increased significantly

compared to 2013. The network of national protected areas has been optimized. Thus, the ecological network in the agricultural regions of the country has been improved. Through the implementation of specific projects, priority natural habitats in the protected forest areas have been restored, maintained and improved. The vitality, productivity and sustainability of the forests have been also improved. The area of the certified forest territories is 57% of the total forest territory in the country as the certified state forest territories take 76 % of the total forest area that is owned by the state.

Systems for certification of production and timber tracing have been implemented, which facilitates the increase of the responsibility of contractors for the services they provide and improves the control over the origin of timber and the products produced.

Increasing the economic efficiency and competitiveness of the forestry sector is of paramount importance both for rural development and for achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. The fact should be taken into account that currently about 55% of the total average annual growth of timber is used annually in forests, which fully and long-term meets the needs of the forest industry and the local population.

In order to achieve better communication between foresters and society, in the last few years training programs for children and adolescents have been developed, related to the understanding of the forestry profession, the ecological interconnections in nature and the right attitude of people towards the environment.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to assure you that the Republic of Bulgaria will continue to actively participate in the activities and contribute to the development of the Forest Europe process, as well as in the commitments related to the preparation of the new EU Forest Strategy, aimed at achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal and the “UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030”. In this regard, we support the understanding that the EU Forest Strategy needs to be coordinated with the “Farm to Fork” Strategy, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and other sectoral strategies in order to maintain its important role, multifunctionality and the contribution of forest areas to the protection of biological diversity, the development of the bioeconomy and the improvement of the living conditions of people in the mountainous and semi-mountainous areas. Sustainable development has no alternative, but requires solidarity from all countries, because forests have no borders.

Thank you for your attention!

Estonia

Mr. Tõnis Mölder

Minister of the Environment

Chairman, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for hosting this meeting in Bratislava. I am convinced this Conference will lead to significant progress in the efforts for development of sustainable forest management of the forests in Europe.

Sustainable Development Goals stress the importance of forests and their role in achieving energy, climate and biodiversity goals, improving the living environment and ensuring human well-being in urban societies. We must preserve the different protective functions of forests, and protect the forest against various pests and diseases. Equally important are the rational use of wood as a natural renewable resource and moving closer to the circular bioeconomy.

To adapt to emerging needs and to be responsive to cross-sectoral challenges, Estonia is preparing a new National Forest Program, which tackles the years until 2030. The process started in 2018, involving all forest related stakeholders from researchers and NGOs, to individuals and public authorities. We have a roadmap to issue the NFP proposal by the end of 2022. The new program will address the sustainable forest management challenges: how to fulfil the climate, energy and nature conservation targets and socio-economical expectations and needs at the same time, while keeping our forests resilient to climate change and natural disturbances.

The role of forests and sustainable forest management in providing nature based solutions is often overlooked. Our messages should be simple and clear: that sustainable forest management is a viable alternative to deforestation and contributes to climate change

adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity as well as livelihoods. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of forests for recreation has increased contributing to human health and well-being. Climate change significantly impacts forests and forestry sector. For example: extreme weather events and pest outbreaks, but also through long-term changes in the composition of forests, production and, the ecological condition of forests or through a possible decline in wood quality. Therefore foresters and forest owners need to be advised on close-to-nature and climate change mitigating forestry practices.

To sum up, more attention needs to be paid to forest pathology, silviculture, use of improved forest reproductive material, biodiversity and strengthening the health and resilience of forests.

Thank You for Your attention!

Georgia

Mr. Levan Davitashvili

*Minister of Environmental
Protection and Agriculture*

On behalf of the Georgian Government let me express my gratitude towards Slovak Republic and Liaison Unit of Bratislava for their excellent work while leading this Pan-European political process. It is a pleasure and great honor for me to address the Ministerial Conference. I would like to reiterate my country's firm commitment towards global efforts on combating climate change and making forests sustainable, effectively managed and well-preserved common good for our present and future generations.

Georgia is situated at the strategically important crossroads where Europe meets Asia. The country is characterized by rich natural forests and biodiversity, but also by extremely high demand on firewood, timber and non-timber forest products. Currently, the Forestry Sector in Georgia is in the reform process to address those challenges and increase its role in sustainable development.

The Government of Georgia is committed to introduce a fully-fledged system of the SFM that would incorporate and address environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, including mitigation of climate change, improvement of human welfare, fostering green growth and job creation.

Establishment of a proper regulatory framework has been the first priority of the country since 2013, when the reform process started. In 2020, we adopted a new Forest Law. Improving legislation is the way towards finding synergies between the sustainable use of natural resources and economic development. Adopting the new regulations puts the Forestry Sector in transitional period that is very critical for us.

The involvement of stakeholders in the process is utterly important during such transitional period, that is why Georgia has established thematic working groups in forestry field. These groups bring together the Government and other stakeholders to discuss the existing policy issues and the ways how to resolve them.

In addition, according to the new regulations, Georgia has the obligation to adopt National Forest Program, thus we plan to elaborate and approve our first National Forest Program in upcoming years.

Since 2016, the Forest Information and Monitoring System (FIMS) has been developing to pool and systematize the information on the forests of Georgia. The goal of forest monitoring is to reflect the quantitative and qualitative state of Georgia's forest, improve forest management, as well as policy planning, and inform the population of Georgia. Georgia had developed a statistical based methodology of forest monitoring on permanent sample plots - the National Forest Inventory (NFI) - with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany during 2016-2018. The implementation of the first NFI started in 2019. The results of the NFI will be available by 2021.

Georgia has developed national principles, criteria and indicators for SFM (C&I) with the support of GIZ and UNECE/ FAO.

In the framework of the forest sector reform, we developed new professional standards for vocational education modules in the following specializations: forest worker, and forest guard. Six vocational education institutions were established, which introduced a new programme in 2017. All those efforts have been made to adapt

forestry education, labor skills and qualification of the workforce to the current demands at the national level.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia has prepared the project “Enabling Implementation of Forest Sector Reform in Georgia to Reduce GHG Emissions from Forest Degradation and Build Ecosystem Resilience to Climate Change” in collaboration with the GIZ. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has approved the project. Therefore, we are delighted to start implementing the project in 2021 and work hard during the next seven years. The project aims to support the SFM in three target regions and establish a self-sustaining market for energy-efficient technologies and alternative fuels to reduce fuel wood consumption that drives deforestation.

With all of these efforts, we aim to establish the common ground for the SFM and biodiversity conservation, to create employment opportunities, and enhance the environmental values of our forests.

Let me refer to the importance of the international support as a key instrument for Georgia to ensure sustainable forest management, especially during COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, I would like to thank the EU and its member states, as well as the UNECE/FAO and other organizations for their continuous assistance.

Thank you for your attention.

Norway

Ms. Olaug Vervik Bollestad

Minister of Agriculture and Food

Excellencies, chairperson and conference organizers

In Norway, forest management contributes to a sustainable economic development. Our forests provides a range of important ecosystem services.

The annual increment and the growing stock of our forests have increased threefold since our first national forest inventory was established in 1919.

Our forest policy aims at increased value creation and employment. We aim at reduced climate emissions. More effective and sustainable ways to use our renewable biomass resources.

The forest- and wood industries is a potential driver for a green shift of our economy.

Wood for buildings and structures contributes to welfare, culture and climate in Norway. We are proud of our wooden architecture. Joint efforts have led to an increase in advanced use of wood in larger buildings, showcasing the possibilities.

It is possible to increase the harvesting and the value creation from our forests. A large increase in demand for wood will require more effective and circular use of forest resources.

Forest owners and managers have a special role in demonstrating sustainable forest management. Good communication should be two-way in order to establish understanding of its role.

To broaden the understanding, it is important to promote knowledge, a skilled workforce, science policy dialogue as well as cross sectoral collaboration. This will further develop sustainable forest management.

To reach climate targets we must maintain and increase the carbon stocks in forests. As well as supplying wood and increasing the carbon stocks in wood products. Wood products can also displace fossil emissions from products and

energy production.

Policy action is needed for enhancing climate effect from forests. In Norway this includes support for planting, afforestation and fertilizing stands on selected areas. My government will also introduce regulations to avoid harvesting of young stands.

Norway has a strict protection target of 10 percent of the forest area to safeguard critically endangered species, habitats and forest ecosystems.

Still, most of the biodiversity is found on the other 90 percent.

We expect a higher demand for forest-based products. Our policy is to strengthen environmental considerations where forestry activities increase. More knowledge about environmental values and forestry practices will play an important role.

We will contribute to the follow-up of this conference and support international processes for climate, nature and a sustainable development.

Thank you.

Lithuania

Mr. Danas Augutis

Vice - Minister of Environment

Dear colleagues,

Forests occupy big part of Lithuania and play an important role in citizens life. That's why all main activities in Lithuanian forests are based on the principles of sustainable forest management, which are reflected in the Law on Forests.

The strategic forestry development goal in Lithuania is to increase multiple benefits provided by forests to society, taking into account the long duration of forest growth, different forms of ownership and by ensuring the implementation of sustainable forest management.

We identify forests as one of the most valuable ecosystems in Lithuania and I would like to share 3 successes in the forests sector and to talk about future challenges as well. Let's start with achievements:

1. The forest cover is increasing in Lithuania.
 - In last 20 years forest area has grown by 2.5%.
 - Currently the forest land area is more than 2 mill. hectares;
 - Furthermore, we plan to expand it by 1.5 percent in next four years;
2. Lithuania aims to ensure the rational use of forests: balancing all ecosystems services and increase the productivity of forests stands.
 - Currently we use about 70 % of the net annual timber volume increment in forests available for wood supply.
 - We plan to retain this logging intensity until 2030.
 - Thus, Lithuanian forests are used sustainably for timber production and we have large margin to balance our future needs for bioeconomy as well as upcoming challenges related to implementation of the green deal;
3. Three years ago, following recommendations of the OECD, Lithuania reformed state forest sector.
 - 42 separate state forest enterprises were merged into one Company. Such reform

created preconditions for optimizing the activities of the enterprise and devoting more attention to forestry activities;

Future challenges:

1. As many other European countries we are in search for new balance of conservation needs, public expectations and bioeconomy demands.

We are in the process of development of National Agreement on Forests.

- It will include a number of discussions evolving broad participation of society and forestry related stakeholders;
 - it will help to identify the essence of sustainable forest management: balance between economic, social and environmental forest functions;
 - National Agreement on Forests will provide basis for preparation of long term strategic document on forests covering climate change, biodiversity protection and other forestry related issues;
2. Second challenge is related to biodiversity conservation and climate change.
 - In most cases proper management practices and sustainably managed forest can be critical in saving remaining biodiversity and in combatting climate change.
 - Our commitment is to enlarge national coverage of protected areas to reach 20 %, a quarter from which would be strictly protected.

Achieving the goals requires a holistic approach and the integrated application of all measures, from public education and awareness raising to legal and science-based solutions.

In the end, I would like to stress once more, that only sustainable development and the joint and coordinated efforts of all of us can produce effective results and ensure implementation of vision, goals and targets for European forests.

Poland

Mr. Edward Siarka

Deputy Minister of Climate and Environment

Dear Mr. Chair, your excellencies, dear colleagues,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to congratulate the Liaison Unit in Bratislava on its excellent leading of the Forest Europe process and I would like to wish to the Bonn Liaison Unit successes in the continuation of the mission for the next five years.

The forests and sustainable forest management in Poland have long played a key role in the implementation of many sustainable development goals.

Forests are a source of many ecosystem services. Among others, they are a source of timber – a renewable raw material. The economic development depends on its production without detriment to the environment. Effective forestation and forest restoration have increased the forest cover rate in Poland from 21% of the country's territory in 1945 to almost 30% of its area today. Forest ecosystems in Poland constitute a valuable and most abundantly represented component of all the nature protection forms and they occupy almost 40% of the areas covered by legal protection.

In Poland, forests play a significant role in achieving the other goals. These include sustainable water management and sustainable energy. It is also necessary to mention the importance of forests for rural development as they create green jobs, as well as in the wood-based, pulp and paper or furniture-making industries. Generally open to the public, forests are also natural recreation and leisure sites. The capital of Poland, Warsaw, is located in the direct vicinity of two large forest complexes. In the situation of the present threats, including the pandemic, they play an important

role for the inhabitants of the agglomeration and the surrounding localities.

Our joint achievement as part of Forest Europe is the establishment of the principles of sustainable forest management. It is based on a balance between the environmental, social and productive functions of forests, with account taken of the ecological approach contributing to biodiversity conservation. Due to such management, every year Poland increases its timber resources for the future generations by about 35 million m³, which represents a mean annual increase in forest area by about 30,000 ha. Multifunctional forest management should be promoted as a concept arising from the Forest Europe process. It provides the basis for forestry in Europe and should also be considered in the future European Forest Strategy. For many years Polish forestry has followed the principles of sustained and sustainable development.

Local communities should play a major role in better communicating to the public the importance of sustainable forest management for combating the current threats, as these communities not only directly enjoy the benefits of forest resources but also observe the adverse impacts of climate change in forests, fires, the spread of pests and diseases and progressive droughts. Direct contact between the public and forest services should be promoted and the benefits arising from sustainable forest management should be more widely presented. Forests which are more accessible to the public are favourable for the implementation of communication and information actions.

We should support and promote international

initiatives, global campaigns and projects promoting sustainable forest management, e.g. the International Forest Day. It is also necessary to support the scientific community who should widely present scientific arguments providing a robust basis for the discussion on sustainable forest management. Recalling the provisions of the Resolution, which we will officially sign soon, I would like to emphasise that the adaptation of forests to climate change is necessary so as to mitigate climate change, to increase the resilience of forests and to protect their diverse functions.

One of the key principles of sustainable forest management in Poland is the integration of nature conservation into forest management. This is reflected in forest management plans which provide for the conservation of forest biodiversity and the restoration of the national animal populations. In Polish forests, we protect rare and endangered plant and animal species, while at the same time taking care of the appropriate state of habitats and species. Recently, an important project to protect the osprey, black grouse and European bison was implemented. The evidence to the species richness of forest fauna in Poland is, among others, the abundance of game animals, which has remained at a very high level for several years. I'm happy to signed today the Declaration of the sustainable forest management.

Thank you for your attention!

Serbia

Mr. Saša Stamatović

Director of the Directorate of Forests

Your excellencies, ministers, distinguished representatives, delegates, observers and dear foresters,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Global processes of biodiversity loss, climate change, and degradation of environment for all living beings on the planet, rise recognition on importance of forests for human society's development and survival. Considering technological development and progress, forest ecosystems capacity to adapt to changes and then help mitigate the adverse effects that are increasingly happening before our eyes is a fundamental condition for the survival of many plant and animal species. Furthermore, forests regulate climate and assist in the conservation of clean air, water, soil and a healthy environment. On the other hand, forests contribute to the creation of jobs and make the basis for the survival of people particularly living in rural areas, moreover, existentially important for the development of "forest-based industry", tourism and other forest related activities. Based on scientific papers, more than 300 forest functions or ecosystem services are recognized nowadays.

As the most complex terrestrial ecosystems, forests are also considered to be the most fragile ones, especially vulnerable to the direct and indirect human impacts.

Forests are national assets in the international legislation order, but numerous factors that affect forests condition, such as climate change, are supranational and require a joint response.

As a part of the European and World community, Serbia shares concerns about the process of deforestation, fragmentation and degradation of

forests worldwide and affirms sustainable forest management as guiding principle.

Acknowledging the importance of forests for the Serbian society, the Republic of Serbia actively participates in the global and regional processes aiming primarily at preserving forests, as well as at contributing to constant improvement of sustainable management of the forests.

"The state of one nation's forests is a mirror picture of economic, social and historical circumstances of the nation." Forests of the Republic of Serbia, which cover about a one third of its territory, have not been spared from adverse impacts. Reflecting on the state of Serbian forests and the forestry sector itself, we have identified a potential for improvement. Therefore, we are working intensively on reforming the forestry sector and strengthening national capacities to increase economic, environmental, and social contribution to our society's development. Bearing in mind the challenges of the modern age, these goals can only be efficiently achieved by joining forces and capacities.

In the previous period, the Republic of Serbia has adopted several crucial documents on climate change that among the others emphasize the importance of forests, while a number of documents are currently being drafted with the forestry sector's active participation in the process. I would like to single out the active participation in process of preparation the National Climate Change Strategy with Action Plan, which is in its final phase. This document will introduce specific measures for strengthening the political, legislative and institutional framework, enhancing research and projects,

as well as improving the forest management system by introducing "Climate-Smart forestry" as an effective risk management system when it comes to climate change. Achievement of aforementioned is preconditioned by enhancing knowledge acquired within forestry-related and other scientific and educational institutions.

We believe that every opportunity should be used to emphasize the importance of forests and forestry for the human kind, thus making the uncompromising implementation of sustainable management as the only option. The Republic of Serbia would like to further develop and expand the cooperation within Forest Europe process.

The Republic of Serbia fully supports the text of the Ministerial Resolution "Adapting Pan-European forests to climate change", and the Ministerial Declaration "The Future We Want: The Forests We Need" and shares the vision and goals for European forests 2030. Therefore, Serbia will be fully dedicated to fulfilling its commitments.

Thank you for your attention!

Slovenia

Mr. Jože Podgoršek

*Minister of Agriculture, Forestry
and Food*

"Slovenia supports integration of environmental and socio-economic forest functions into sustainable forest management.

Slovenia, with its 60 % of forest land cover, acknowledges crucial role of forests in reaching Sustainable Development Goals, Paris agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity. At the same time are forests important for rural development and transmission into green bioeconomy.

For named reasons, Slovenia continues decades long policy of including principles of nature protection, sustainability and multifunctionality into forest management planning, and enabling free access to forest social functions. During all this time has forest land cover increased and biodiversity generally improved.

Undividable is sustainability connected with responses to challenges and disturbances. Already measured climate change represent a threat to forest: in the fast 50 years, has average air temperature increased for nearly 2 degree Celsius and precipitation amount decreased for 12 %. In order to maintain our forests healthy and stabile, we must provide their constant adaptation to changes and increase their resistance.

Our experiences teach us how sustainable management can improve situations. Slovenia has al ready renewed forests, degraded in the past century due to the acid rain, and achieved optimal average growing stock of 320 m³ /ha, as defined from environmental and socio-economic aspect.

Sustainable forest management in Slovenia is, despite sanitary cut in forests, damaged by ice sleet in 2014 and over population of bark

beetle in years 2015-2019, enabling achieving specific goals of replacing environmentally less friendly materials and fossil fuels with wood, and at the same time enable favourable status of several forest species, also large carnivores and herbivores.

By promoting principles of sustainability, multifunctionality and close-to-nature way of forest management, has Slovenia no objections in joining presented declaration and resolution. Slovenia also wishes for Forest Europe to continue its work within given important role in connecting forestry topics, knowledge sharing, and publishing technical and expert publications. Last, but not least, I wish to thank Slovakian team for their excellent leadership and all the best to Germany in years to come. Slovenia will continue to support Forest Europe also in the future."

Sweden

Ms. Jennie Nilsson

Minister of Rural Affairs

Dear colleagues,

Let me first thank my Slovakian colleague for organizing the Ministerial Conference. It is unfortunate that we cannot meet in Bratislava. However, despite the difficult circumstances, you have made it possible for us to meet virtually. This is indeed much appreciated.

The ministerial conference gives us an important possibility to meet and have dedicated, in-depth, discussions on forests in Europe. It is only regrettable that we do not do this more often within the Forest Europe process as we have important questions on our agenda.

Over the years, we have seen an increased global interest in sustainable development. Forests and forest-related issues are at the very centre of this discussion. I think we all see and feel the big interest and awareness of forest-related issues in society right now.

Sustainability is of course nothing new to Forest Europe. On the contrary, sustainability is at the very heart of what we do. The continuous promotion and work on sustainable forest management is an important achievement of Forest Europe.

The State of Europe's Forest is another important achievement. It is an excellent tool and guide for monitoring the development of sustainable forest management in Europe. This is not to say that we are done. Quite the opposite.

As stated in the ministerial declaration, we must secure and promote sustainable forest management with the aim of maintaining the multiple functions of forests. We must also recognize the essential role of forests and sustainable forest management in protecting the environment. Sustainable forest management is an essential approach for enhancing the role of forests in mitigating several negative trends that we see today.

The strong emphasis on sustainable forest management in the declaration is important. It gives us yet another solid foundation on which to base our future work. It sets the target clear. While sustainable forest management can be seen as a broad concept, we cannot do everything at the same time. Looking ahead, we should keep our work focussed. We must avoid too many parallel tracks at the same time.

Forest Europe is the voluntary high-level political process for dialogue and cooperation on forests in Europe. It has been so for over thirty years. During this time, the political landscape has changed. Information is travelling faster than ever before. This adds a new dynamic to the dialogue and cooperation in Forest Europe.

To remain relevant, we must make sure that we can respond rapidly to emerging issues. We must ensure that we provide a platform fit for modern day's political conditions. Sustainable forest management is a dynamic concept. We must make sure that Forest Europe as a process, as well as an organization, is equally dynamic. One part of this is of course to continuously reflect on the modalities of our work.

Dear colleagues. The discussion on sustainable development and the role of our forests will continue. Forest Europe has been the voluntary high-level political process for dialogue and cooperation on forests in Europe for more than thirty years. It should continue to be so. A lot has been achieved. A lot remains to be achieved. Let me take this opportunity to once again thank the outgoing Slovak chairmanship. Let me also take this opportunity to welcoming the incoming German chairmanship. I very much look forward to working together with you. You can count on Sweden's continued support.

Thank you!

Ukraine

Mr. Yurii Bolokhovets

Head of State Forest Resources Agency

Excellencies, heads of delegations, ladies and gentlemen

Let me welcome you on behalf of the Ukrainian delegation and express my gratitude to the organizers of the conference, who at this difficult time were able to perfectly organize and conduct the conference for all of us.

Ukraine has always actively supported the FORESTS OF EUROPE and we are going to continue this good tradition in the future. Today, the forestry of Ukraine is going through difficult times - this is both the negative impact of climate change with the constant increase in the areas of die-back, and severe environmental restrictions on forest management, which are overlaid with the economic crisis in the country and the consequences of COVID-19. The past year was especially difficult for forestry in Ukraine - large-scale forest fires in the East part and Polesie region of Ukraine, as well as flooding in the Carpathian region, which, unfortunately, many associate not with unfavorable weather conditions, but with forestry activities.

Therefore, the issue of communication with society is now just as important for us as an strengthening work on reforestation, including on the territories of Zhytomyr and Lugansk regions that have been damaged by forest fires. Unfortunately, the area of burnt forests in the Luhansk region (29.2 thousand hectares) and the lack of appropriate investments will prolong the reforestation process for many years. We are looking for possible international mechanisms to support forest restoration and would be grateful for any help from international organizations in this regard.

In the context of enhancing the transparency of forestry activities, I am proud to announce our developments in creating a Integrated Forest Portal, which will accumulate all information about the forests of Ukraine and permits documents in the field of forestry in the near future. The main purpose of creating such a portal is the need to provide the public and control authorities with a mechanism for operational control over the legality of forestry activities, so that no one else has doubts about the legality of harvesting operation in Ukraine.

I would also like to inform you that in order to strengthen the dialogue with the public, the State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine annually conducts an all-Ukrainian campaign "Let's create forests together". This year we also acted as a co-organizer of the global action "Greening the Planet", organized by the charitable foundation "Greening Ukraine". On April 10, where it was possible within the framework of quarantine restrictions, citizens of not only Ukraine but different countries participated in the campaign (in general 100 countries of the world) - planted trees in squares, parks, forests in order to join efforts in greening the planet. Even if the overall result of 1 million trees is not so big, we all perfectly understand that in every country during the period of reforestation more significant numbers of trees are planted, but it was really an event that unites ordinary people of different nationalities and professions in their intention to restore forest landscapes.

Ukraine supports the goals for European forests 2030, which will receive official status today. In many ways they are ambitious and now it

depends on all of us how much they will be fulfilled. It is extremely important to develop timely and effective mechanisms for adaptation to climate change in forestry. Now the Strategy of Environmental Safety and Adaptation to Climate Change is under procedure of coordination with all interested authorities in Ukraine and this Strategy contains a section on forestry. Also, in the near future, scientific recommendations will be developed for the adaptation of the forestry practice to the new climatic conditions we are leaving today.

With regard to biodiversity conservation, I'd like to underline that in Ukraine, work on the identification of virgin forests has been completed (about 30 thousand hectares) and now the process of setting up nature reserves at such territories is underway. It should be noted that the percentage of nature reserves in the forests of Ukraine, which today is more than 16%, is significantly higher than the all-Ukrainian indicator of preservation.

Ukrainian forestry has a lot of things we are proud of and we are open and ready for further cooperation and are ready to share our achievements.

Thank you for attention

UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Ms. Olga Algayerova
Executive Secretary

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Esteemed colleagues,

I am honoured to add my voice to this important exchange today on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Many thanks go to Mr. Ján Mičovský, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Slovakia, for his kind invitation.

As those of you present here today will know, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has been a trusted ally to 56 countries working to improve sustainable management of their forests across Europe, North America, and Asia. Together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, with whom we share a joint Forestry and Timber Section in Geneva, we support countries to develop evidence-based policies for sustainable forest management, communicate the importance of sustainable production and consumption of forest products, and ensure that ongoing efforts are fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

The latest global and regional forest assessments show that, contrary to global trends, forest cover in Europe has been growing over the last three decades. This is without a doubt a testament to some outstanding policy efforts by many of the governments present here today. I would like to express my appreciation for the excellent cooperation between UNECE, Forest Europe and FAO who work together with countries to collect, analyse and disseminate the data that make such assessments possible. We look forward to continuing this work.

As we enter the UN Decade on Ecosystem

Restoration, it is more important than ever that we combine our efforts to streamline activities and communication on protecting, restoring and maintaining our precious terrestrial ecosystems. In this respect, the Joint Forestry and Timber Section works closely with colleagues at the United Nations Environment Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to ensure proper coordination and outreach of our activities that contribute to the Decade.

I would particularly like to highlight our ongoing support to countries in Eastern and South-East Europe and Central Asia and the Caucasus, to restore their degraded lands by making a pledge to the Bonn Challenge.

Thus far, in Central Asia and the Caucasus, 7 countries pledged to restore over 3 million hectares of degraded land, and we hope that the upcoming Ministerial Meeting for countries of Eastern and South-East Europe, scheduled for October 2021, will result in an increased commitment to restore degraded lands and increase forest cover in this subregion as well. I hope to see some of you there. I am also pleased that our initiative at increasing urban canopy cover, the "Trees in Cities Challenge", continues to grow: over 20 cities worldwide pledged to plant 11 million new trees throughout 2020 and 2021, with the latest commitment coming from the city of Moscow.

These efforts are just some examples of how we can work together to contribute to the Decade, and ensure we are on track to meet the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in this time that we have left.

Thank you for your attention.

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization

Ms. Mette Wilkie

Director of Forestry Division

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Forests provide the air that we breathe and the water that we drink. They are home to the vast majority of terrestrial biodiversity and without forests, climate goals cannot be met.

Forests also provide numerous products for everyday life - from the traditional use of wood to the masks, gloves and hand sanitizers that we all use during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

They provide more than 86 million green jobs and support the livelihoods of many more people worldwide.

Moreover, 35 percent of global food production benefits from animal pollination and many of these pollinators live in forests.

The link between forests and human health is receiving renewed attention. Over 70 percent of recognized emerging infectious disease events - of which the COVID-19 pandemic is one - are zoonotic.

As we increasingly encroach on forests and wildlife habitats to expand agricultural production, settlements and infrastructure, the risk of diseases spilling over from animals to people rises exponentially.

So it is clear that we cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the future we want unless we manage our forests in a sustainable manner.

FAO, FOREST EUROPE and UNECE work closely together to help promote sustainable forest management and to monitor progress towards global and regional goal and targets.

The data collection processes for the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 and for the State of Europe's Forests 2020 report used the same online platform, which significantly reduced the reporting burden on countries. All the data collected are now available through this open access platform hosted by FAO.

The forest sector needs to play a central role in sustainable development and in "building back better" after COVID-19. To this end, the joint UNECE and FAO Forestry and Timber Section together with FOREST EUROPE recently published a set of "Guidelines on the promotion of green jobs in forestry".

But we need to do more. Both within Europe and beyond.

FAO, together with the other 14 members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, is stepping up action to turn the tide on deforestation to help reach the Global Forest Goals as well as global climate and biodiversity targets.

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, which FAO co-leads with UNEP, aims to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and offers additional opportunities to contribute to a green recovery.

Sustainability is a concept that derives from forest management. Let's live up to this promising concept of managing our forests in a sustainable manner for the benefit of people and the planet.

EFI - European Forest Institute

Mr. Marc Palahi

Director

Dear excellencies, dear ladies and gentlemen,

In the next decade Europe needs to transition to a post-fossil economy, an economy that is climate-neutral, nature-positive and inclusive. However, this transition is not possible without a visionary and transformative approach to our forests. We need a New Deal for European Forests.

Such a Deal is urgently required because we are facing an unprecedented “forest” situation. On the one hand, climate change and natural disturbances are bringing many of our forests to a tipping point where they can no longer provide crucial ecosystem services - for instance, some forests becoming a source of carbon instead of a sink. On the other hand, forestry and the forest-based sector have unprecedented opportunities related to their potential to generate renewable, biobased solutions. These are crucial to decarbonize our economy and create jobs for a socially fair green transition.

A New Deal for European Forests has to be rooted in sustainable forest management, which needs to be adapted and adopted according to the latest scientific knowledge. Sustainable forest management is key to take advantage of the emerging forest-based opportunities to finance and implement the urgent adaptation-restoration measures required to ensure the health and resilience of European forests. Because such forest-sector opportunities are the main tool we have to address the unprecedented risks related to climate change. At the same time, enhancing forest biodiversity from the genetic to the landscape level is the most important investment that the forest sector can make to ensure its economic prosperity. Policy frameworks,

investments and forest management need to acknowledge such relationship by creating synergistic incentives and integrated approaches that connect both mitigation and adaption efforts as well as bioeconomy and biodiversity goals. But to create those frameworks we also need institutionalized mechanisms to ensure an effective, balanced and transparent science-policy-practice dialogue. In this context, Forest Europe as a high-level policy process will need to play even a stronger role in enabling an informed dialogue, including as well other sectors, media, investors and society at large. Count on the European Forest Institute for such an important task!

Finally, an informed dialogue also needs robust and harmonized data and information to build a common understanding of the effects of climate change, natural disturbances, forest management and global markets on European forests. Dear ladies and gentleman, We need not only to understand the present situation but also to anticipate the forests that we need, so that we can build the future that we want.

Thank you Slovakia for the good work with the Presidency and looking forward to working with Germany and all the other Forest Europe countries.

CEI-Bois - European Woodworking Industry Confederation

Ms. Margherita Miceli
Policy Officer

Good afternoon.

CEI-Bois, the European Confederation of the Woodworking Industries, would like to thank you for the opportunity to make a statement in this important conference.

European forests play a key role in Europe's transition to a climate-neutral and competitive economy. The latest report on the State of European Forests shows that Sustainable Forest Management provides adequate tools to ensure that forests fulfil environmental, social and economic functions. This implies the possibility to both develop the forest-based industries and maintain or increase our forest resources, provided that climate adaptation strategies are in place.

1. We need both Sustainable Forest Management and a competitive forest-based industry to maximise the climate mitigation potential of the sector, which is obtained when forests are growing fast through active management and renewable and recyclable wood-based products replace fossil-based products.

Today, the climate impact of the forest-based sector is estimated at -806 million tons of CO₂ equivalents per year. This corresponds to a mitigation of around 20% of all fossil emissions in the EU, and includes the carbon sink, the carbon storage but also the substitution effect, which appears to be as relevant as the forest sink.

2. We also need a sustainable supply of wood raw materials to maximise our contribution to the European circular bio-economy. In turn, income from wood is essential for

forest owners to invest in sustainable forest management.

Nowadays the woodworking industries (including furniture industries) employ over 2 million people in over 300,000 companies across Europe, and offer an example of circular bioeconomy in action.

European timber processing generates low to zero waste; by-products and residues from primary processing can be used as raw material for other wood-based products and as renewable energy source. Timber products are long-lasting and they can be easily re-used or recycled, thereby prolonging the carbon storage effect.

Therefore, we ask that forest policies recognise and continue to support this important role of our sector in the creation of green jobs and growth.

Thank you.

CEPI - Confederation of European Paper Industry

Mr. Jori Ringman

Director General

Honorable Ministers, dear Liaison Unit, thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate in this conference. Today this Ministerial Conference exists since over 30 years.

The past 30 years have seen significant progress also in the industry. Today, innovations have made the pulp and paper industry a frontrunner in the sustainable European bioeconomy. We count 139 biorefineries across Europe. We have almost doubled our recycling rate, reduced specific CO2 emissions by 44,8 % and are a solution provider for Europe's 2050 targets. The substitution effect of forest-based products has become as significant as forest sink. Looking forward, expectations will only grow. The bioeconomy is key in ensuring the economic viability of the European forestry model.

What we value and share in Forest Europe are commitments: The signatories committed in 1993 to promote SFM, and development of criteria and indicators by this Ministerial Conference has enabled the authorities demonstrate continuous progress. This has been the basis for joint criteria in EU legislation e.g. to ensure sustainability of forest bioenergy.

Another important commitment in the Helsinki resolution of 1993 is to better communicate and explain SFM so that it ensures coherence of forest impacting policies. The State of Europe's Forests report is an excellent tool to do so. In this way those policies - be it on renewable energy, products, or finance - can make a constructive contribution to sustainable forest management while tackling the transition to 2050.

The positive impact of the bioeconomy needs to be measured against the same forestry criteria

in all forest-related legislation. Demonstration of this positive impact will grow more and more important.

We support Forest Europe to elaborate concrete actions and measures to further embed biodiversity and climate aspects in SFM holistically, allowing it to continue to be referred to in European legislation.

SFM is the basis for success in using nature-based solutions in our economy and, in turn, the economy will continue to support SFM.

CEPF - Confederation of European Forest Owners COPA - COGECA

Joint statement

On behalf of, European private forest owners and farmers and agri-cooperatives, we would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to present our views today.

Societal expectations towards forests have been rising over the last decades. Forests are expected to provide key solutions for mitigating climate change, enhancing biodiversity and contributing to economic and social recovery.

The Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) definition, criteria and indicators that have been agreed by all of you at Pan-European level are the foundation of European forest management practices. We consider crucial to continue improving and possibly revisiting this later to ensure that they respond to current and future challenges and opportunities.

State of the art SFM is the holistic and integrative answer to the complexity of dynamic forest-development.

Forest management decisions are not easy and straight forward, are not free of charge and entail some risks. Flexibility is needed when it comes to management choices. This is even more true today in a context of growing natural disturbances.

Forest management practices encompass biodiversity preservation as well as carbon sequestration. These aspects are equally important as the many other services that forests provide, including the provision of renewable raw material to the society, recreational services, or environmental benefits other than biodiversity.

It is also important to stress that wood supply is the main ecosystem service that generates revenue for forest owners allowing to finance

forest management operations and investments. The other benefits provided to society are to date rarely economically valued and rewarded.

In a context where there are more and more questions and concerns regarding the future of our forests, explaining SFM challenges and opportunities to the society is crucial. CEPF, COPA-COGECA and ELO have recently launched a campaign entitled "Welcome to my forest". We invite all of you to watch these short video clips where forest owners from all over Europe explain in a few words what being a forest owner means.

As a conclusion, we should trust and support the approach to sustainable forest management that has been implemented for decades in a dynamic and evolving way. This does not mean remaining static and not facing the existing challenges. On the contrary, it means that forest owners and managers will continue to adapt, learn, and innovate as they work with nature to maintain forests and respond to societal expectations.

We hope that our views will be considered in the further discussions and will continue to support Forest's Europe activities.

EUSTAFOR - European State Forest Association

Mr. Reinhardt Neft

President

Distinguished Chairperson, ministers, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As President of EUSTAFOR, representing 36 European State Forest Management Organizations, it is an honor to speak at the 8th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference organized jointly by the Ministers of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

This Ministerial Conference comes at an opportune time to debate how sustainable and multifunctional forest management can help to cope with all of today's emerging challenges. Over the last years, the crucial role of forests and the forest-based sector has been addressed in both EU and international sustainable development policy frameworks – the EU Green Deal, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and climate and biodiversity conventions, and other related processes. In parallel, we have observed a dynamic evolution in the public perception of – and societal attitudes towards – forests.

European state forests share the 2030 vision, goals and targets for European forests embedded in the commitments of this ministerial conference, while emphasizing the need for forest policy to offer optimal solutions to practitioners in the field. EUSTAFOR has three messages for this conference.

1. Sustainable and multi-purpose forestry needs a solid economic basis

Sustainable and multifunctional forestry is considered to be the solution to balance the complex and, sometimes, conflicting sets of demands on forests. The current societal debate opposing the active management of forests ignores the fact that a viable forest economy – including monetary aspects – is a precondition for the delivery of all other functions. In addition, financing will be needed to cope with the impact of climate change on

forests.

2. Healthy and resilient forests are an important part of the solution to climate mitigation and carbon

The oversimplified view of seeing forests exclusively as carbon sinks, while ignoring their role in carbon storage (in harvested wood products) and as a substitute for fossil-based materials and energy, must be supplanted. Using wood boosts the bioeconomy and helps to defossilize Europe.

Due to the significant impact of climate change on the health and growth of forests, the pan-European forest policy must also address topics such as adaptive forest management.

3. Sustainable forest management conserves and improves biodiversity

European forests provide a home for biodiversity and nature at a scale that cannot be offered by any other land use. It is well known that sustainable forest management is not only compatible with the conservation of biodiversity and nature but, in most cases, actively contributes to its maintenance and enhancement.

Distinguished Chairperson, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The future of European forests – with their long life cycle – depends on the political and managerial decisions that are made today. We fully share the ministerial commitments of this conference. With our knowledge and expertise, we will actively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how Europe's

forests can help to accomplish the multiple ambitions of sustainable development and a future-fit Europe.

Thank you for your attention.

FSC - Forest Stewardship Council

Mr. Matteo Mascolo

EU Advocacy Manager

Honourable Chair, honourable ministries, dear participants, dear observers,

What is FSC?

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, non-governmental membership organization that promotes the environmentally sound, socially beneficial, and economically prosperous management of the world's forests.

The entire organization encompasses more than 1,000 members in 89 countries. The governance of FSC is structured around a three-chamber model, guaranteeing balanced multi-stakeholder decision-making across environmental, social, and economic interests. As of April 2021, FSC has approximately 220 million Certified Hectares.

FSC: a sustainable tool to achieve SDGs

Started as a voluntary and market-driven tool, the FSC scheme is increasingly used by public authorities as part of their sustainable development agendas. FSC certification is a tool to help achieving many SDGs – in particular goal 15 “life on land”, and its Target 15.2. The FSC forest management standards place strict requirements on forest managers to prevent deforestation, avoid forest degradation, and maintain biodiversity and ecosystem functions. Only forest managers that meet these standards are granted FSC certificates.

Applying the principles of FSC in forest restoration and afforestation projects can direct them towards the creation of multifunctional forests, with benefits that goes beyond the borders of the project itself.

FSC certified forests as nature-based solutions

FSC certified forests are also a nature-based solution (NbS) to help addressing climate change,

biodiversity loss, and social injustice.

To be effective, NbS require collaboration among various actors. FSC believes in the importance of working in alliances to create incentives that make NbS attractive.

As a multistakeholder platform balancing social, environmental and economic considerations, FSC can bring together different actors to develop forest stewardship and robust verification mechanisms, complementing efforts carried out under public and private initiatives to meet global targets.

The new FSC ecosystem service procedure

With specific regard to climate and biodiversity, FSC has recently launched its ecosystem service procedure.

This new procedure enables forest landowners, smallholders and communities with the tools to verify and derive value from their positive impacts on ecosystem services.

The impacts on carbon sequestration and storage; conservation of biological diversity; watershed services; soil conservation; and recreational services can now be verified.

This new procedure thus offers businesses and governments an innovative tool to demonstrate and communicate the impact on the conservation and restoration of forest ecosystem services.

FSC is eager to work with Governments to enhance sustainable forest management practices encompassing biodiversity protection in Europe and worldwide, and test innovative models to deliver benefits from the Ecosystem Services Procedure.

Thank you for your attention.

IUFRO - International Union of Forest Research Organizations

Mr. Christoph Wildburger

Coordinator, Global Forest Expert Panels

Dear Chair,

Your excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

IUFRO - the International Union of Forest Research Organizations - appreciates the opportunity to deliver this statement at this crucial point in time when the importance of international cooperation and political decision-making based on sound science is more apparent than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has added an extra dimension of urgency to efforts aimed at tackling global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the sustainable management of the world's forests.

Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between regional and global institutions, drawing on scientific knowledge needed to address the problems at multiple scales.

IUFRO welcomes the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration and the Bratislava Ministerial Resolution agreed by Forest Europe's signatories. Notably, IUFRO endorses the commitment to promote and use a proactive science-policy dialogue to further inform decision-making. With the comprehensive scientific expertise of its hundreds of member organizations worldwide, including the vast majority of countries represented at this conference, IUFRO is well positioned to provide relevant independent scientific evidence to support the deliberations and outcomes of the Forest Europe process on key issues, and to ensure coherence with the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

IUFRO also welcomes the Ministers' commitment to regularly report on the State of Europe Forests, and will encourage the numerous IUFRO

scientists, who were involved in this undertaking so far, to continue to contribute their expertise to these assessments.

The Bratislava Ministerial Declaration also commits to continue and enhance the collaboration of Forest Europe with the United Nations Forum on Forests and other relevant international actors. As a member of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, IUFRO forms an integral part of the International Arrangement on Forests.

Within the CPF, IUFRO leads and coordinates the Global Forest Expert Panels initiative - in brief: GFEP - an internationally recognized instrument at the science-policy interface. GFEP compiles and analyses scientific information on forest-related issues of high global concern, and provides comprehensive, independent, peer-reviewed reports to relevant international political forums to support evidence-based decision-making, also at the regional level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

IUFRO is committed to support Forest Europe and to work together with its scientific partners in Europe to systematically provide existing and new scientific knowledge to policy makers, including through GFEP and other mechanisms.

IUFRO also stands ready to join a pan-European science policy dialogue and contribute its expertise on key issues of the policy debate, such as forest risks, climate change, sustainable forest management and related criteria and indicators, bio-economy, green jobs and forest education.

I thank you for your attention!

UEF - Union of European Foresters

Mr. Tomasz Markiewicz

UEF Vice-President

The Union of European Foresters (UEF) was created in 1965 and is the oldest and largest organization of professional foresters in Europe, joining together 25 groups of forestry associations from 21 countries (Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldavia, Poland, Spain, Sweden Switzerland and Turkey). The UEF represents ca 85.000 foresters of all ranks working for different kind of forest owners (state, community, private). The individual statement of the UEF is presented as followed:

The ongoing climate change reinforced by the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic is bringing the world in a dramatic way more and more out of balance. The European Professional Forest managers and Forest owners are highly concerned about the future of European Forests and the living conditions of future generations in Europe and worldwide.

European foresters have a firm understanding of their responsibilities for sustainable forest management and sustainable development. This relates to the protection of nature and environment, considered in their forest operations, including the protection of water quality as well as, also their awareness of the importance of the use of renewable resources from forests.

Future of the European forests should be seen through the multifunctional roles that forests are playing in the life of societies. Forests must be seen in the context of complex societal challenges such as climate change, population growth and increasing resource shortages caused by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, especially those that are high carbon emitting. Such recognition requires, among others, improved communication

about benefits of forests in a green economy through a comprehensive, European-wide, inclusive communication strategy that joins the commitment and support of all stakeholders.

Forest management is multipurpose and is based on combination of functions that include wood production, wildlife protection, recreational, scientific, educational and social. To tackle the climate change foresters invest in water retention and in active protection measures to strengthen the forest stand to withstand the effects of the climate change (pest gradations, drought, wind throws). Taking the forests under strict protection won't slow down the negative climate changes, but it will probably accelerate the problem. Forest should be treated as buffering systems of the climate change. Only multipurpose, sustainable development with maximized afforestation of non-forest areas (highest CO₂ absorption) and programs for promoting the above mentioned practices for private owners may bring higher benefits.

Multifunctional and Sustainable Forest Management is the right tool to ensure these key actions in a consistent way in the various European forest ecosystems and should be the base of a coherent strategies.

This includes fighting climate change as the main reason for the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services by timber production. Every green economy needs the sustainable raw wood material, which is natural and renewable.

Beside the active participation of Forestry in a green economy in the context of an ongoing climate change SFM also ensures biodiversity and ecosystem services by close to nature forestry and can develop the forest ecosystems in a climate stable way. In addition to the existing number of completely restricted forests, the

different functions of forests should be ensured in a combined way in the same stands without segregation of functions in different stand. In the past, forests were managed in a sustainable way. The biodiversity in forests, which must be kept now, was included in the forest management process and ecosystem services for the society were offered for free by the forest owners.

No value or price of these services have been derived, even if there is a conscience that there is a high value of fresh air, binded CO₂, recreation and tourism in forests and biodiversity.

Forests are currently dying, forest ecosystems are changing rapidly, invasive species are spreading and the economic base of Sustainable Forest Management and the delivering of Ecosystem Services is changing in a fundamental way.

Society is demanding services without giving them a value in the market system, because there is a problem in the different sectors how to do the monetization. A very wide range, of ecosystem services has to be offered by the forest owners for free and only some very special projects can be financed by the public.

Education and communication of the goals of the sustainable management, water protection and increased wood accumulation are prerequisites to raise the qualification of foresters, workers, contractors and stakeholders, and to affirm their commitment to contribute to these goals. We are pleased to acknowledge that many commitments of the resolutions aim at improving communication and raising awareness. However, it is imperative that this message reaches all actors in forest management and forest operations. Finally appropriate means need to be developed and implemented both at a political and a practical level.

In the future, basic ecosystem services should be compensated to the landowners, at least with partial flat rates. With the rapid and extreme development of climate change in the last years, this financing system of forestry will not work in the future anymore.

The loss of stock in the forests by bark beetle and dryness, the natural disasters due to climate change, the collapse of timber prices all over Europe and the additional costs for road safety measures are not compensated in an adequate way by the society, which caused the damages by the climate change. The polluter pays principle is not applied and the economic situation of many forest owners deteriorates dramatically.

The professional and experienced Forest Managers, working daily in the European Forests, look forward to a strong rules, including:

- the strengthening of Multifunctional Sustainable Forest Management to ensure all different requested forest services to make the Green deal successful;
- a better coherence of all sectoral demands to Forests and Forest Management;
- the beware of ecosystem services by multifunctional Sustainable Forest Management without further segregation of different forest functions;
- a well-educated, well-equipped and safe working Forest Workforce;
- establishing of the urgently needed new financing system in European Forests as compensation for the cost free services offered by the forest owners.

USSE - Union of Foresters of Southern Europe

Mr. Leire Salaberria

Managing Director

Distinguished Chair, ministers, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I have the honor and pleasure of taking the floor here today on behalf of the Union of Foresters of Southern Europe.

We are very glad to have the opportunity to address this FOREST EUROPE 8th Ministerial Conference.

This period of the COVID health crisis and the resulting economic crisis, have brought us to a historic turning point. Everything that is happening now, serves to further reaffirm the need for a change in our production and consumption patterns as a society, for a more efficient use of resources, and to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come, which are undoubtedly the great challenges of our time.

The forest sector, through sustainable forest management, plays and will play a crucial role in finding solutions to some of these complex challenges. Forests have a prominent role in the Paris Agreement on climate change, and are an intrinsic part of most, if not all, of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Governments need to continue to work on implementing national strategies that respond to regional and international commitments on climate change and sustainable development, with a special focus on incentivizing a circular bioeconomy that allows our society to move towards more renewable raw materials.

And it is only right and necessary that European forests and sustainable forest management occupy a center and prominent place in these strategies in order to decarbonize society and change our habits and consumption patterns.

Wood is a perfectly viable alternative to fossil-fuel based products and energy sources, and it could,

if properly promoted and supported, replace them.

Sustainable Forest Management will ensure in the next generations, at least that the same forest surface and the same amount of wood we have today in Europe's forests endure.

USSE would like to emphasize that Europe's forest owners are not only part of the solution to these challenges, but are also necessary to meet them.

Therefore, in the current socio-economic and political context USSE, wants to highlight the importance of sustainable forest management that forest owners adhere to as a fundamental tool, a vital key in the contribution to this bio-based low carbon economy.

However, we must not forget the major challenges facing these forest owners in striving to sustainably manage their forests today: a lack of profitability, fragmentation of properties, a lack of generational replacement, increased extreme climatic events resulting in natural disasters, pests and diseases..., to which all European territories are more and more frequently exposed because of the impact of Climate Change.

Therefore, if forest owners have the necessary technical and financial support from the relevant institutions to manage their forests, this management will contribute to a greater resilience of these forests and they will be better able to carry out their multiple functions, and ultimately to the social and economic well-being of Europe.

In USSE we believe that our forests are a huge source of opportunities nowadays and we, the foresters, should and are striving to take advantage of this. There is no gain just saying that forests in the context of a circular bioeconomy offer great opportunities for the forest sector, in

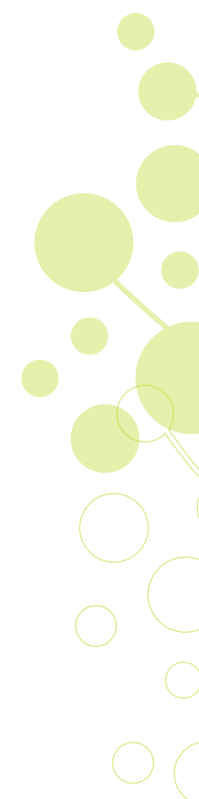
terms of development, sustainable growth and creation of jobs.

We, foresters, need to be more pro-active than just saying. We need to act, to raise awareness among the youth of today and the public and to have a stronger louder voice and better tools to further convince society and the policy makers of the merits of our forests and their owners.

We, as forest owners, are willing to continue managing our forests in order to contribute to a sustainable future for our society and thus, we request due recognition and support for our work.

We look forward to continuing to work together on these relevant matters and will support and contribute to the efforts of FOREST EUROPE to consolidate current and future developments.

I thank you for your time and attention.





Signature of the Ministerial documents

BRATISLAVA 2021



Bratislava Ministerial Declaration

"The Future We Want: The Forests We Need"

Adopted by Expert Level Meeting through a silence procedure on 16 December 2020 for consideration and signature by the ministers at the Eighth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

We, the representatives of the Signatories of FOREST EUROPE, at the Eighth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Bratislava on 14-15 April 2021,

1. STRESSING the vital role of forests and sustainable forest management in Europe for providing multiple benefits for the environment, economic and social development, and livelihoods;
2. NOTING the unprecedented situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative effects on the European and global economy and societies, and in this regard STRESSING the irreplaceable role that European forests play for human health and well-being;
3. EMPHASIZING that forests and sustainable forest management in Europe play a critical role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Forest Goals of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests, and contributing positively to the implementation of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, the Katowice Forest Declaration, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Convention on Biological

BRATISLAVA 2021



Bratislava Ministerial Resolution

Adapting pan-European Forests to Climate Change

Adopted by Expert Level Meeting through a silence procedure on 17 November 2020 for consideration and signature by the ministers at the Eighth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

We, as representatives of the Signatories of FOREST EUROPE, at the Eighth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Bratislava on 14-15 April 2021,

1. RECALLING and BUILDING on FOREST EUROPE resolutions, declarations, and decisions, specifically Strasbourg Resolution 4, Helsinki Resolution 4, Vienna Resolution 5, and Madrid Resolution 2;
2. RECALLING that the impetus for the First Ministerial Conference (Strasbourg, 1990) was the need to tackle specific challenges in forest protection, such as combating the negative effects of air pollution, and STATING that our forests now face similarly grave threats;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING that climate change and biodiversity loss are the pressing and urgent issues of our time and their impacts are global in scope and unprecedented in scale, and therefore ACKNOWLEDGING that FOREST EUROPE should revisit and enhance its engagements;
4. RECALLING the findings of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land, the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration, and the EEA report Climate Change, Impacts and Vulnerability in Europe 2016;
5. RECOGNISING that urgent actions to maintain and enhance the health condition of forests and the multiple role they play, including for future generations, are necessary to implement the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Paris Agreement;
6. BEING CONCERNED about negative impacts on European forests from storms, fires, drought, pests and diseases, which are increasing in severity due to climate change, affecting the ability of forests to fulfil their multiple functions;
7. UNDERLINING that the adaptation of forests to the negative effects of climate change is necessary if forests are to fulfil their essential role in mitigating climate change, as well as to prevent damage to forests, enhance their resilience, and safeguard the multiple functions of forests;
8. RECOGNISING that halting the loss and degradation of forest ecosystems and promoting their restoration are essential to reaching the targets of the Paris Agreement and, in relation to that, RECALLING the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.



Andorra



Austria



Belarus



Belgium



Bulgaria



Cyprus



Croatia



Czech Republic



Estonia



European Union



France



Georgia



Germany



Greece



Holy See



Hungary



Iceland



Ireland



Italy



Lithuania



Luxembourg



Malta



Montenegro



Norway



Poland



Portugal



Romania



Slovakia



Slovenia



Spain



Sweden



Switzerland



Turkey



Ukraine



Annexes

Annex 1: Conference Programme

Wednesday, 14 April 2021

10:00-10:30 Opening of the Eighth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

- Words of welcome:

H. E. Zuzana Čaputová, the President of the Slovak Republic

- Words of welcome:

H. E. Ján Mičovský, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and Chair of the Conference

- Words of welcome:

H. E. Julia Klöckner, the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture of the Federal Republic of Germany and Co-Chair of the Conference

- Key-note speech:

Janez Potočnik, special advisor to the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

10:30-10:45 Presentation of the State of Europe's Forests 2020

10:45-12:30 Ministerial Roundtable 1: Adapting forests to changing climate

- Interactive panel discussion with a professional moderator and panelists

Tomáš Hlásny, Professor of Forest Biology at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague

Fanny-Pomme Langué, Secretary General, Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)

Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, Director Emeritus of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

Eckart Senitza, President of ProSilva Europe

- Ministers' statements

12:30-14:00 Conference break

14:00-16:00 Ministerial Roundtable 1: Adapting forests to changing climate (cont.)

- Ministers' and observers' statements
- Planting a memorial tree by Slovak minister

16:00-16:05 Closure of the first day

Thursday, 15 April 2021

9:30-9:35 *Opening of the second day of the Ministerial Conference*

9:35-12:00 *Ministerial Roundtable 2: Sustainable forest management - our joint answer to the vision of sustainable development*

- Interactive panel discussion with a professional moderator and panelists

Emma Berglund, Forest director in charge of EU and international affairs at the Swedish Forest Industries Federation

Gerhard Dieterle, Former Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

Cecil Konijnendijk van den Bosch, Urban Forestry Expert

Brunno Pozzi, Regional Director for Europe, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

- Ministers' and observers' statements

12:00-13:30 *Conference break*

13:30-14:30 *Ministerial Roundtable 2: Sustainable forest management - our joint answer to the vision of sustainable development*

- Ministers' and observers' statements

14:30-14:50 *Short presentation and signature of the ministerial documents*

14:50-15:10 *Handing over FOREST EUROPE Chairmanship and Closing*

- Statement of Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic

- Statement of Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture of Germany

15:10-15:30 *Conference break*

15:30-16:00 *Press Conference*

Annex 2: List of Participants

Members of delegations are provided in chronological order of their registration, except heads of delegations who are always listed first.

SIGNATORY COUNTRIES

ALBANIA

Blendi Kosi
Minister
Ministry of Tourism and Environment

Klodiana Marika
Director of Programs for Environment
Development
Ministry of Tourism and Environment

Ylli Hoxha
Head of Forest Sector
Ministry of Tourism and Environment

AUSTRIA

Elisabeth Köstinger
Federal Minister of Agriculture, Regions
and Tourism

Maria Patek
Director General for Forestry and
Sustainability

Welsch Harald
Member of Cabinet

Gerfried Gruber
Director for Forest Policy, Forest
Economy and Forest Information

Lisa Lehner
International Forest Policy Officer

BELARUS

Vitaly Drozhzha
Minister of Forestry of the Republic of
Belarus

Valentin Shatravko
First Deputy Minister of Forestry of the
Republic of Belarus

Sergey Chernyavsky
Head of the Forestry Department of the
Ministry of Forestry of the Republic of
Belarus

BELGIUM

Céline Tellier
Minister

Jean-Pierre Scohy
General Inspector of the Nature and
Forest Department of the Walloon
Region

Marie-Hélène Lahaye
Ministerial Advisor
Christine Farcy
International Forest Policies

Carl De Schepper
Senior Expert Algemeen Beleid

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Dušan Nešković
Assistant Minister

Boris Markovic
Head of Department

BULGARIA

Desislava Taneva
Minister

Georgi Kostov
Adviser

Spas Todorov
Head of Strategies and Planning in
Forest Areas

Denitsa Pandeva
Chief expert, Science and International
Affairs Department, Forest
Management Directorate

Elena Rafailova
Chief expert, Management of Forest
Territories Department, Forest
Management Directorate

CROATIA

Marija Vuckovic
Minister

Srecko Juricic
Head of Department

Maja Mihaljinac
Adviser

Renata Ojurovic
Director of the Directorate for Forestry,
Hunting and Wood Industry

Sime Mrcic
State Secretary

Goran Videc
Head of Sector

CYPRUS

Costas Kadis
Minister
Charalambos Alexandrou
Director

Savvas Andrea
Head of Planning and European Affairs
Section

Antonis Sarris
Planning and European Affairs Section

CZECH REPUBLIC

Patrik Mlynář
Deputy Minister for Forestry section

Natalie Srbková
Counsellor, Department of Forest Policy
and Economy

Tomáš Krejzar
Director, Department of Forest Policy
and Economy

Jaroslav Kubišta
Deputy Director for Forest Management
and Forest Ecology

Vít Šrámek
Director

ESTONIA

Tõnis Mölder
Minister of the Environment

Marek Metslaid
Adviser to the Minister

Marku Lamp
Deputy Secretary General

Rauno Reinberg
Senior Officer

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Janusz Wojciechowski
Commissioner for Agriculture

Magdalena Majerczyk
Cabinet Expert, Cabinet of Mr Janusz
Wojciechowski, Commissioner for
Agriculture

Maciej Golubiewski
Head of Cabinet, Cabinet of Mr Janusz
Wojciechowski, Commissioner for
Agriculture

Jorge Pinto Antunes

Member of Cabinet, Cabinet of Mr Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture

Kamil Ochmański

Policy Assistant, Communication Adviser, Cabinet of Mr Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture

Pierre Bascou

Director, Directorate D - Sustainability and income support, DG Agriculture and Rural development

Mauro Poinelli

Head of Unit D4 - Environment, climate change, forestry and bio-economy, Directorate D - Sustainability and income support, DG Agriculture and Rural development

Ignacio Seoane

Deputy Head of Unit D4 - Environment, climate change, forestry and bio-economy, Directorate D - Sustainability and income support, DG Agriculture and Rural development

Alfonso Guttirrez Teira

Team Leader on Forestry and Bioeconomy, Unit D4 - Environment, climate change, forestry and bio-economy, Directorate D - Sustainability and income support, DG Agriculture and Rural development

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Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

Teemu Seppä

Senior Ministerial Adviser

Maarit Loiskekoski

Ministerial Adviser

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Desk Officer

FRANCE**Julien Denormandie**

Minister of Agriculture and Food

Philippe Duclaud

Deputy Director General of Forests

Sylvain Réallon

Deputy Director of Forest, Forestry and Timber

Isabelle Mellier

Deputy Assistant Director of Forest, Forestry and Timber

Iris Le Roncé

Advisor on European and international forest affairs

GEORGIA**Levan Davitashvili**

Minister

Carl Amirgulashvili

Head of Biodiversity and Forestry Department

Aleksandre Rukhadze

Chief Specialist of Protected Areas and Forest Policy Division, Biodiversity and Forestry Department

Nino Tandilashvili

Deputy Minister

Natia Tskhovrebadze

Head of Strategic Planning and Development Department

GERMANY**Julia Klöckner**

Minister for Food and Agriculture

Matthias Schwoerer

Head of Division European and International Forest Policy

Steven Dörr

Policy Advisor

Franz-Josef Mayer

Undersecretary (Ministerialrat)

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Director General of Forests, Sustainability and Renewable Resources

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Panagiotis Drougas

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Head, Directorate of Planning and Forest Policy

Vassiliki Dalakoura

Advisor to the Secretary-General for Natural Environment and Water

HOLY SEE**Mons. Giacomo Guido Ottonello**

Apostolic Nuncio in SR

Andriy Yevchuk

Deputy of the Apostolic Nunciature

Ján Bittšanský

Secretary

HUNGARY**István Nagy**

Minister

Sándor Szentpéteri

Deputy State Secretary

Dávid Bencsik

Deputy State Secretary

Péter Király

Head of Department

András Szepesi

Advisor

ICELAND**Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson**

Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources

Björn Barkarson

Director General, Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources

Throstur Eysteinnsson

Director

Adalsteinn Sigurgeirsson

Deputy Director

Gunnlaugur Gudjonsson

Chief Financial Officer

IRELAND**Pippa Hackett**

Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity

Fergus Moore

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Patrick Nulty
Assistant Principal Officer, Forestry
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Linda Morris
Higher Executive Officer, Forestry
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Stiofan Nutty
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ITALY

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Minister

Luciano Pezzotti
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General Director of General Directorate
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Head of office - General Directorate of
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Silvia Ferlazzo
Civil Servant DIFOR2

LATVIA

Kaspars Gerhards
Minister of Agriculture

Arvids Ozols
Director

Ilze Silamikele
Deputy Head of Division

Normunds Struve
Deputy director

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Simonas Gentvilas
Minister of Environment

Danas Augutis
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Claude Origer
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Frank Wolter
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Herman Galea
Director General - Ambjent Malta

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MONTENEGRO

Aleksandar Stijovic
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NORWAY

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Frode Lyssandtræ
Deputy Director General

Harald Aalde
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Plenipotentiary for Forestry and
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Michał Graczyk
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ROMANIA

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Minister of Environment, Waters and
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Cristian-Mihai Enescu
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Sebastian Constantin
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Simon Poljanšek
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OBSERVER ORGANISATIONS**CEI-BOIS****Margherita Miceli**

Policy Officer

CEPF**Hubert de Schorlemer**

President

António Paula Soares

Board Member
Fanny-Pomme Langue
Secretary General

Hélène Koch

Policy Advisor

CEPI**Jori Ringman**

Director General

Henrik Sjölund

Member of Capi board and CEO of Holmen

Stewart Begg

Chairman of Capi Forest Committee and Global Sourcing Director Sustainable Fibre of Essity

Ulrich Leberle

Raw Materials Director

COPA COGECA**Martin Hobarth**

Chairman of the Working Party on Forestry

Oana Neagu

Director

EFI**Marc Palahi**

Director

Robert Mavsar

Deputy Director

Michele Bozzano

EUFORGEN Coordinator

Helga Pülzl

Head

ELO**Ana Rocha**

Senior Policy Adviser

EOS**Silvia Melegari**

EOS - Secretary General

Diego Benedetti

EOS - Market expert

EUSTAFOR**Reinhardt Neft**

President EUSTAFOR, CEO Bayerische Staatsforsten

Aigar Kallas

Vice President EUSTAFOR, CEO Riigimetsa Majandamise Keskus (RMK)

Juha Niemelä

CEO Metsähallitus, ExCom Member of EUSTAFOR

Piotr Borkowski

Executive Director

FAO**Mette Wilkie**

Director, Forestry Division

Peter Csoka

Associate Secretary-General, World Forestry Congress Team, Forestry Division

Norbert Winkler

Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Europe

Ekrem Yazici

Forestry Officer, Deputy Chief of the Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section

Anssi Pekkarinen

Team Leader, Global Forest Resources Assessment, Forestry Division

FSC**Matteo Mascolo**

EU Advocacy Manager

IUFRO**Christoph Wildburger**

GFEP Programme Coordinator

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