

FOURTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE

28 – 30 April 2003, Vienna, Austria



VIENNA LIVING FOREST SUMMIT DECLARATION

**EUROPEAN FORESTS –
COMMON BENEFITS, SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Living forests are a basis of life on Earth. By sustaining forests, we sustain life.
2. Forests create multiple benefits: they provide the raw material for renewable and environmentally friendly products and play an important role for economic welfare, biological diversity, the global carbon cycle and water balance. They are essential for providing environmental, protective, social and recreational services, especially in the light of an increasingly urbanised society. Forests are an important resource for rural development providing livelihoods for a diverse workforce, local communities, millions of forest owners as well as forest related enterprises. We, as policy makers, are responsible for achieving, in the forest sector and pro-actively with other sectors, a balance between the economic, ecological, social and cultural roles of forests in the context of sustainable development.
3. Forest sector policies contribute to sustainable development as a whole and are themselves often influenced by major cross-sectoral decisions. We are convinced that co-ordination and partnerships are crucial to further promote all benefits of forests in Europe and for the sustainable development of our societies.
4. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), as a regional policy process, has pursued the protection of forests by further strengthening the sustainable management of European forests since 1990. Being aware of the continuous process of implementing previous MCPFE commitments and the emerging new challenges, we commit ourselves to continue our efforts to that end and further contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
5. Global commitments, most recently those of the WSSD¹, need to be translated for and implemented at the regional, national, and sub-national level. In this respect we underline the role of the MCPFE and other regional forest-related processes and agreements in implementing global commitments on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests.

¹ World Summit on Sustainable Development

LIAISON UNIT VIENNA

6. We also recognise our role in contributing to the development of forest-related commitments at a global scale.

As representatives of the Signatory States and the European Community, we commit ourselves to

Benefiting rural livelihood and urban societies

7. strengthen conditions for the economic viability of sustainable forest management and support the role of forests, forestry and forest-based industries in maintaining and developing rural livelihoods as well as in meeting the demands of urbanised societies,
8. promote incentives for the protection and sustainable management of forests, and remove incentives with a negative impact on forests and their biodiversity,
9. take measures to increase the sound use of wood from sustainably managed forests as a renewable and environmentally friendly resource,
10. take measures to maintain and strengthen the services of forests in providing protection from natural hazards,
11. fully reflect the social and cultural dimensions of sustainable forest management in forest-related policies,
12. address the challenges that forest owners are facing in Central and Eastern European Countries, especially those related to changes in forest ownership,

Building strong partnerships

13. improve understanding of how policies and strategies developed in other sectors strongly influence the forest sector and vice versa,
14. identify key cross-sectoral issues, actors and interactions and, on this basis, establish a dialogue to seek joint solutions; the resulting policy choices should both further sustainable forest management and sustainable development as a whole,
15. develop new and strengthen existing partnerships at the international and national level between governments, governmental organisations, civil society including non-governmental organisations and the private sector,
16. use national and sub-national forest programmes as a means for effective inter-sectoral co-ordination, reflecting a balanced decision making process,
17. take forest-related decisions based on science, take measures that support and strengthen research and increase interdisciplinary research,

18. continue the fruitful pan-European co-operation with all partners, especially with UNECE/FAO² and Environment for Europe/PEBLDS³, and increase co-operation with other regional forest processes,
19. further develop co-operation among countries with different socio-economic situations, especially with regard to Central and Eastern Europe,

Tackling global challenges

20. take effective measures to promote good governance and forest law enforcement, and to combat illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade, and contribute to international efforts to this end,
21. take concrete measures to contribute to the overall reduction of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and promote the concept of sustainable forest management in relation to UNFCCC⁴ and its Kyoto Protocol,
22. take further steps to maintain, conserve, restore and enhance biological diversity of forests, including their genetic resources, in Europe and also on a global scale,
23. further support the United Nations Forum on Forests, with the assistance of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as key intergovernmental mechanisms to facilitate and co-ordinate the implementation of sustainable forest management at all levels,
24. further promote and contribute to the full implementation of the IPF/IFF⁵ proposals for action, the Multi Year Programme of Work of UNFF⁶ and its Plan of Action, as well as the CBD⁷ Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity and other global forest-related commitments,

Putting MCPFE commitments into action

25. promote sustainable forest management by further implementing, applying, and if necessary improving, criteria and indicators for monitoring, assessing and reporting progress on sustainable forest management; in this regard we endorse the use of the "Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management as adopted by the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting, 7-8 October 2002, Vienna, Austria",

² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe / Food and Agriculture Organization

³ Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

⁴ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

⁵ Intergovernmental Panel on Forests / Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

⁶ United Nations Forum on Forests

⁷ Convention on Biological Diversity

26. develop a work programme for the implementation of the commitments of this Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the reinforced implementation of previous commitments, in co-operation with all relevant organisations, institutions and processes.