

**National Report to the Fifth Session of the
United Nations Forum on Forests**

Republic of Bulgaria

I. Key Contacts

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II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

1. General information

- *assessment (including of the relevance, priority, status of implementation, planned actions) of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context*

Being part of the international community, together with other agreements, Bulgaria joined the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and with all the participants took the obligation to start the implementation of the approved in 1997 Proposals for Action. Subsequently, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests took the responsibility to fulfil in practice the above mentioned proposals, followed by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

In the last Decade in our country a few very important steps to the forest sector priorities implementation were completed. In 2002 was developed and subsequently approved by the Council of Ministers the National Forest Policy and Strategy, in which underlies bigger part of the main Proposals for Action implementation– biodiversity conservation, sustainable and multifunctional forest management and others (proposals 17-?, 29-?, etc.). Coordination mechanisms for cross-sectoral approach were developed to follow the trends of the forest sector development, including all the stakeholders but with the need of strengthening and improvement of their effectiveness (17-h, etc.), the local communities were ensured in sharing fair and equitable the benefits of the forests (29-?); Bulgaria is in a continuous process of collaboration with international organizations and donors from developed countries for determination and achievement of the sustainable forest management (67-?) etc.

- *development and implementation of your national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests*

In order to ensure the sustainable forest management, the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of forests in the country, the Government of Bulgaria launched a process of formulating a National Forest Policy and Strategy (NFPS). In October 2002 it was developed and subsequently approved by the Council of Ministers. The process was and is a major undertaking, involving inputs from experts as well as all relevant stakeholder groups and society as a whole and it sets the stage for all major decisions concerning the sector for 10 years. The National Forest Policy and Strategy is based on a number of world-recognized principles adopted by FAO, IPF/IFF and MCPFE such as: wide participation of stakeholders, inter-sectoral approach, conformity with the national legislation, integration with the National Plan for Economic Development, agreement with international engagements, initiatives and conventions related to forests, partnership in implementation and, increasing public awareness.

- *international cooperation, including development and implementation of partnerships*

Bulgaria has signed Resolutions of the Ministerial Conference of the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), UN Convention on Biological Diversity; Convention on Protection of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats; A number of requirements of European legislation, concerning the protection of nature like Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna, Directive 79/409/EEC on conservation of wild birds and Pan-

European Strategy of Conserving the Biological and Landscape Diversities and Kyoto protocol to Convention of Climate Change.

Some international partnerships are under implementation as follows:

1. Phare-Trans Border Cooperation – with Romania, Greece and Turkey;
2. Bulgarian-Swiss Forestry Programme (BSFP) Purpose of the programme: Support the forestry sector in the efforts to ensure balance between the ecological, economical and social functions of forests through their sustainable and close to nature management. The first phase of the project started in 1997 and was finished in 2000; the second phase started in 2001 and was completed by the end of 2003. The 3-years long third project phase is under implementation.
3. German-Bulgarian project “Support for the Restitution of Forests and their Management”. The main goal was support of the forest restitution process in Bulgaria and the management of the non-state forests in a sustainable and close-to-nature way. The project was started in year 1999 and completed by the end of 2003. At this moment a second Project “Promotion of the Agricultural and Forestry Structures in the Rhodopes, Bulgaria” is in phase Elaboration of implementation plan. The Project aims to promote the state and private institutions and persons, providing services, had acquired skills and capacity to offer consulting services in order to enhance the competitive power of the agricultural and forestry companies.
4. Turkey - Cooperation Protocol, including agreements on: experience and information exchange in the field of biodiversity conservation and multifunctional forest management, possibility for Common Protected Area “Strandja Mountain”; common forest fire management
5. World Bank’s Forest Development Project

The aims of this project are through rehabilitation and sustainable management of forest resources to increase contribution of these resources to the national economy and benefits to the rural populations of Bulgaria; to conserve ecosystems of global biodiversity significance through mainstreaming of biodiversity in national forest policies, integrating conservation activities in routine forest management and strengthening the network of protected areas. Project implementation was planned for the period 2004-2010.

6. World Bank’s “Forestry Fuel Switch” Pilot Project
The project will be implemented in accordance with the Joint Implementation mechanism (Art. 6) of the Kyoto Protocol. Certain quantities of greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced through the realization of two main tasks: the construction of heating systems, using wood biomass from thinning instead of conventional fuels, and afforestation with fast-growing species for energy purposes. The project started 2004 and will be completed in 2006.
7. EU-Phare Project (BG/2003/IB/AG/05/UE) “Strengthening of the administrative capacity of the state forestry administration”. The project aims the support of the implementation of the National Forestry Policy and Strategy through strengthening of

administrative capacity of the state forestry administration for sustainable management of the state forest resources and to operate on competitive market principles.

8. FAO Project “Strengthening capacity for forest fire prevention” started in October 2003. Its main objectives are: Strengthening capabilities of interdepartmental government institutions as well as multiply level stakeholders in dealing with forest fire prevention and management; developing a legislative framework for an integrated forest fire management programme in Bulgaria; and increasing public participation and interest in fire prevention.
9. Forest Communicators Network (UN-ECE/FAO) - in Sofia was held the XII Forest Communicators Network Meeting and Bulgaria became a member of it.
10. ENA FLEG – political initiative launched by a number of countries to strengthen the forest law enforcement and governance process in the region of Europe and North Asia. Bulgaria is a member of the International Steering Committee and in this connection hosted a Balkan Consultation Workshop on ENA FLEG issues at the end of April, 2005 in response to the significant growth of corruption and crime related to illegal logging and associated trade.

- *mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation, including indigenous and local communities, in forest sector planning, decision-making and/or forest management*

The National Forest Policy and Strategy was based on a Participatory approach. It was created through an open dialog with all major stakeholders groups.

Other mechanisms to facilitate participation are the following processes: NATURA 2000; Forest Certification Process; Multifunctional Forest Planning (still not included in the national legislation); draft of National standard for forest certification.

Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to thematic issues of UNFF 2

? Combating deforestation and forest degradation

2. preparing diagnostic studies to analyse historical and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, including processes outside the forest sector
3. formulating and implementing national policies and strategies, through an open and participatory process, for addressing the underlying causes of deforestation
4. raising awareness of the importance of issues related to deforestation and forest degradation and the multiple values of forests

Nevertheless a deforestation process is not observed, one of the NFPS’s milestone is the extension of the wooded areas.

?? Forest conservation and protection of unique types of forest and fragile ecosystems

5. creating or expanding protected areas to safeguard forest and related ecosystems and their full range of values and, developing and applying criteria and methodologies for assessing the conditions and management effectiveness in protected forest areas

Though small in territory, Bulgaria ranks third in Europe in biodiversity, with a number of rare and endemic species, which is determined by its geographic position among three zones at the

boundary between Europe and Central Asia. Most of its forests, 1.490 mil. ha or 37 %, are of the so-called special functions, i.e. protective and recreational forests, as well as forests in protected areas. There are 3 national parks, 10 nature parks, 35 managed and 55 strict reserves, 359 nature landmarks ? 402 protected sites.

However, Bulgaria does not have a systematic network of protected areas to ensure that all habitats and species of national and international interest are maintained or restored in a favorable conservation status. The establishment of such a network is required under the Bern Convention (Emerald) and is a prerequisite for accession to the EU (NATURA 2000). The expected area of all the future protected sites in Bulgaria is expected to be approximately 12-15 % of the territory of the country or 30 % of the Forest Fund.

The Bulgarian - Danish bilateral programme for cooperation in the field of environmental protection, DANCEE (Danish Cooperation for Environment in Eastern Europe) supports Bulgaria in ensuring that natural habitats and species of wild flora and fauna of national and European interest are sufficiently represented in areas designated for biodiversity conservation. This objective calls for a systematic approach to biodiversity conservation and is in accordance with the Protected Areas Act and the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act that aims to implement Bulgaria's international obligations.

The project will have four outputs:

- A systematic network of candidate Natura 2000 sites established, in accordance with the European Natura 2000 network.
- Capacity of MoEW, MAF, their regional offices, scientific institutions and NGOs to carry out inventories and to identify potential Natura 2000 sites increased.
- Participation of local authorities and stakeholders in biodiversity planning and management enhanced.
- Biodiversity conservation awareness among the general public and authorities raised

As a consequence of the Danish project, during the period 2005-2006 the Ministry of Environment and Waters will finance a Project "Establishment of Natura 2000 Protected Areas Network in Bulgaria"

The CBC Phare project "Promotion of Sustainable Development and Conservation of Biodiversity in Bulgarian-Romanian Cross Border Region" will support the preservation of biodiversity and promote sustainable development in cross-border areas, through joint development actions in the field of nature protection.

6. developing and implementing partnership mechanisms to engage forest owners, private sector, indigenous people and local communities in the planning and management of forest conservation areas and developing and implementing a range of innovative mechanisms for financing and encouraging forest conservation

A National Biodiversity Strategy and its Action Plan were developed and adopted. Together with the Biodiversity Act and the Protected Areas Act we can point a solid base for implementing partnership mechanisms in the planning and management of forest conservation areas as the used Participatory Approach in the Management Plans of the National and Nature Parks and the Reserves.

Bulgaria continues to play its part in the international agenda for forestry and has signed and ratified the majority of international agreements and conventions, which either directly or indirectly affect forest management and conservation.

7. giving high priority in national forest programs to the rehabilitation and sustainable management of forests and trees in environmentally critical areas, recognising the linkage between forest protection and sustainable development and improving the coordination among such policies and programmes

As environmentally critical areas in Bulgaria can be pointed the upper forest boundary and the eroded areas. It is foreseen obligatory deforestation in such areas.

Other environmentally critical areas are these, burned from forest fires. Till a few years ago the forest fires were one of the main problems. The drastic increase of their number and the area affected by them during the period 1998-2001 (total number of forest fires 3133 on an area of 92016 ha) required urgent solution of the problem of management of the very fires and the burnt forest areas. So, the development and introduction in the practice of forest fires management methods are defined as one of the most important tasks for achieving the main purpose of the "Conception for forest protection from fires in Bulgaria" Strategy, approved by the Second national round table on the problems of the forest fires. Also, the Bulgarian forest fire legislation is already adjusted to the requirements of the EU, according to Regulation 2158/92.

The burned areas are also foreseen for obligatory deforestation.

???. Rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover

The Bulgarian forests occupy 33 % of the territory of the country and this percentage makes her a well forested European country.

The country timber market is satisfied with all kind of wood products, the establishment of additional plantations for accelerated timber production and for energy sources is foreseen.

Referring to the above mentioned reasons, the points 8, 9, and 10 proposed for countries with low forest cover have not priority in Bulgaria.

8. expanding forested area, establishing and managing plantations to enhance production of forest goods and services, while avoiding the replacement of natural ecosystems, and recognizing the role of imports in satisfying the needs for forest products and services
9. promoting the regeneration and restoration of degraded forest areas including through partnerships and building capacities to promote effective participation in decision making, and development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies
10. improving the efficiency of international cooperation to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and building capacity to monitor forest resources

?V. Rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands and promotion of natural and planted forests

See ???.

11. promoting the creation of new forest resources through plantations and recognizing their role in rehabilitation of degraded lands and forests in environmentally critical areas
12. promoting policies to meet increasing demand for wood and non-wood forest products and services, through sustainable forest management.

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V. Economic aspects of forests, including trade

13. valuation of forest goods and services (this may include, among other things, the development and use of new valuation methodologies, valuation of a wider range of goods and services, and policy decisions that reflect a more comprehensive assessment of forest values)

14. the amount, scope, or quality of market data and information for wood and non-wood forest products and their substitutes

In the National Forestry Board Annual Report statistical data concerning wood removal, non-wood forest products removal, value of wood removal and other data related to forest industry are published yearly. Bulgaria takes part in Forest Resource Assessment, FAO/UNECE (2000 and 2005) and participates also in preparation of data and reports for Forest Products Markets and Statistics, FAO/UNECE.

Part of the processes of valuation of forest goods and services is the implementation of the Council Directive 1999/105/EC on the Marketing of Forest Reproductive Materials.

15. use of economic and policy instruments to facilitate progress toward sustainable forest management (these may include improved tax policies and forest revenue collection systems)

The sustainable development of an economically viable forest sector is the basic principle of state forestry policy (NFPS) in Bulgaria.

The SAPARD programme, Measure 1.4, gives significant investment opportunities in the non-state forests in particular.

A key instrument for the investments in the forest sector after 2007 will be European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF).

16. efforts to reduce negative impacts of trade
17. participation in forest certification and labelling schemes and work toward mutual recognition and comparability of such schemes, and

UNDP and the National Forestry Board started a pilot Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification of two forest units in Bulgaria – state owned and privately owned;

18. efforts to reduce illegal trade (exports from or imports into your country) in wood or non-wood forest products. Please indicate achievements made, lessons learned, constraints encountered, and planned initiatives.

Bulgaria is supporting the efforts to reduce the illegal trade and is participant in the Europe and North Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (ENA FLEG) Ministerial Process. Bulgaria is a member of the International Steering Committee and in this connection hosted a Balkan Consultation Workshop on ENA FLEG issues at the end of April, 2005 in response to the significant importance of these problems.

- Forest guards.

V?. Forest health and productivity

19. If damage to forests from air pollution is a significant problem in your country, please provide information on recent national strategies or programmes to minimize damaging air pollution. Please indicate if your country is involved in any international cooperation efforts aimed at strengthening scientific knowledge, increasing information access or reducing the impacts of long-range air pollution on forests, as well as your views on the role of enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels to facilitate such work.

See: Point 1

An annual assessment and monitoring of the air pollution impact over forest ecosystems according International Intensive Monitoring Programme related to harmonization of EU legislation “Protection of Community Forests Against Atmospheric Pollution” is realized.

V???. Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs

20. Please indicate progress made and lessons learned in efforts to harmonize or to make compatible policy frameworks in your country (e.g. national forest programme or a similar policy framework for forests, biodiversity strategies and action plans, national action plans to combat desertification, etc.) that collectively address the full range of forest values.
21. Please provide information on recent efforts to assess long-term trends in national supply and demand for wood, non-wood forest products and services and whether your country’s national forest programme or similar policy framework for forests takes into consideration future needs for forest goods and services. Please provide views on how enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels, including through UNFF, could further facilitate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action

It is planned in the NFPS to increase annual harvesting up to 8 million m³ of standing timber in response of increased demand of an industrial wood. Production of goods with higher added value – forest industry production, processing of medicinal plants, mushrooms and forest fruits-will have a two-fold economic impact in terms of increased revenues and employment.

The relative share of the revenues from harvesting in the state forests is expected to decrease while revenues from other types of forest resource use will increase. This change in the structure of the revenues is of strategic importance both for the state organization and the private owners, as it will make them less vulnerable to the fluctuations in timber prices.

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V???. Social and cultural aspects of forests

The strategic goal of the NFPS is to increase the social benefits from forests and the revenues for their owners, as management practices applied are based on the principles of respect of ownership, equal rights of the consumers and social justice. In order to achieve the strategic goal, the following actions are envisaged: developing and implementing a methodology for proper estimation of the social functions and recreational potential of the forests; cultural and historical heritage and spiritual values integration in the management of the forests; elaboration of a mechanism for commercialization of the ecological benefits of the forests.

22. promoting the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of forest genetic resources and addressing the issue of intellectual property rights, including the identification of the origins of forest genetic resources, taking into account work undertaken by the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international agreements
23. strengthening the role of women in sustainable forest management, including through capacity building and greater participation in community-based forest management

Not applicable

24. integrating local and indigenous communities in sustainable forest management programmes, particularly as regards (a) recognition and respect of the customary and traditional rights and privileges of indigenous and local communities, (b) participation in decision making regarding the management of forests, (c) the attainment of secure land tenure arrangements, (d) capacity building and technology transfer for sustainable forest management directed at indigenous and local communities

?? Traditional forest-related knowledge

25. inventorying, cataloguing, and applying traditional forest related knowledge for sustainable forest management and promoting research on TFRK with the involvement of the knowledge holders

Not applicable

26. supporting the application of intellectual property rights and/or other protection regimes for traditional forest related knowledge, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of traditional forest related knowledge, innovations and practices

Not applicable

? Scientific forest-related knowledge

27. disseminating scientific knowledge to all interested parties, including through new and innovative ways, and strengthening capacity and mobilizing funding for national and regional research institutions and networks

The forestry sector in Bulgaria has long traditions. In 2004 there were two Anniversaries – 125 years organized forests management and 120 years organized hunting movement. The University of Forestry in Sofia celebrates 80th Anniversary in 2005.

In the field of forestry research the Forest Research Institute, the Forestry University and the two Research Stations (for oak species and for fast growing species) have many years of experience.

The NFPS envisages strengthening capacity of these institutions

28. enhancing interaction between scientific research and policy processes, including priority setting of research, addressing of knowledge gaps and using scientific knowledge to support decision-making

Not applicable

?? monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions

29. improving information on national forest resources, making the information widely available, assisting other countries in their related efforts

Not applicable

??? criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management

30. developing and using criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (at national level and/or subnational level and for policy, planning, management and/or monitoring purposes), and participating in regional and/or international C&I processes

In the aspect of multifunctional forestry and biological diversity the NFB has the goal to improve the condition of forests and forest resources and to achieve compliance with internationally adopted principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable management through:

- Implementation of nature-friendly forest management regimes promoting the natural regeneration potential of forests;
- Reforestation of denuded forest areas, extension of the forest area and improvement in the sustainability, productivity and capacity for CO₂ assimilation of forests with the aim to meet the needs of society for forest products and a healthy environment.

The main strategic actions to achieve the multifunctional forestry are: promote and encourage thinning of young stands; acceleration the conversion of coppice stands to high forests, through timely; implementation of the necessary silvicultural activities; promotion forest management regimes and practices, which facilitate the creation of mixed uneven aged forests; design and implementation a national forest inventory compatible with the requirements of EFICS; support measures for the priority restoration of forest areas damaged or destroyed by fires, withering, grazing and illegal logging; promotion the forestation of marginal agriculture lands, including production of biomass for technological processing and for energy by using specialized national and international financing schemes; improving the condition of the field protection forest belts; applying specific silviculture measures aimed at production of special, high quality timber; updating the national program for erosion control in the forest and agricultural areas; improving forest management planning to enable compliance with best international practice and sustainable multifunctional forest management; support initiatives and measures for the certification of Bulgarian forests in order to certify at least 30% of Bulgarian state owned forests.

In addition, member States may wish to refer to the resolutions and decision of UNFF relevant to the above elements, i.e. resolutions 2/2 E paras. 1.-4., 4/1 paras. 1.-16., 4/2 paras. 1.-8., 4/3 paras. 1.-18, respectively, and provide information on the implementation of these resolutions or their contribution to facilitating the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

III. Preparation of the Report

31. Describe the process of preparing this report, including which government agencies and stakeholder groups were involved, and the extent to which they contributed. Provide information on successes, challenges and lessons learned in the preparation of this report.

The Report is prepared by the National Forestry Board/Ministry of Agriculture and Forests with the assistance of the Bulgarian Swiss Forest Programme and the German Bulgarian Project.

There is a need to further strengthen the processes of communication and cooperation with National Statistic Institute and the Ministry of Environment and Waters.