



Sustainable forest management in the Pan-European region - achievements, challenges and planned actions in relation to issues to be addressed at UNFF8

**Pan-European contribution to the Eighth Session of
the United Nation Forum on Forests**

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INTRODUCTION

In light of the existing regional cooperation, and based on respective mandates of each organisation, this report has been jointly prepared by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission (UNECE/FAO), the European Forest Institute (EFI), and the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (Efe/PEBLDS) in response to an invitation from the secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF). It presents a summary of Pan-European achievements, major developments, challenges and plans for future actions on sustainable forest management in relation to issues that will be addressed at the Eight Session of the UNFF, 20 April–1 May 2009.

At the 5th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe held in Warsaw, Poland in 2007, the Signatory States and the European Community committed themselves to contribute to the achievement of the Four Global Objectives on Forests as well as the implementation of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI) and the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the UNFF for 2007–2015.

In the UNFF RESOLUTION 7/1 regional entities were invited to contribute to the discussions of the Forum, according to their respective mandate. The European forest ministers in the Warsaw Declaration welcomed the achievements made at UNFF7 and highlighted the importance of providing consistent European inputs to the international forest policy dialogue.

The ministers decided to develop, in cooperation with other regional bodies, processes and agreements, consistent inputs from the pan-European region to the work of the UNFF, addressing the agenda items of UNFF sessions and strengthening the collaboration with the international arrangement on forests, *inter alia*, through sharing regional perspectives, approaches and experiences.

The joint session in October 2008 of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission 'requested that the UNECE/FAO Secretariat prepare an input to UNFF8, from the European region, in continued cooperation with MCPFE, which was mandated by the 5th Ministerial Conference to provide an input, as well as with Efe/PEBLDS and EFI'.

The secretariats of EFI and Efe/PEBLDS have participated in the preparation of this report, in accordance with the instructions of their governing bodies.

PAN-EUROPEAN REGIONAL COOPERATION ON FORESTS

The European forest sector is endowed with a rich infrastructure of international organisations and processes, which operate at the regional, sub-regional or global levels, and bring together governments, researchers, the private sector or civil society. The four entities that cooperated on this note are briefly presented below.

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe¹ (MCPFE), launched in 1990, provides a regional policy framework on forests and forestry in Europe. It involves 46 European countries and the European Community as signatories and around

¹ <http://www.mcpfe.org>

40 organisations as well as countries from other regions as observers. It is a voluntary and non-institutionalised platform for dialogue and decision making on forest issues at the political level with the aim to protect and sustainably manage forests. The MCPFE also provides a forum for interaction between the ministers responsible for forests and the public, non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations. The involvement of stakeholders and public is a fundamental principle of the MCPFE process which influences its decisions.

MCPFE has defined the main concepts underlying the idea of sustainable forest management. The implementation of the ministerial commitments is carried out by countries at the national level and through the MCPFE Work Programme at the pan-European level in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Environment for Europe (EFE) Ministerial Process and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), as well as other partners.

The UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission² are two regional bodies of the UN family who jointly implement an integrated programme whose objective is to “strengthen the forest sector and its contribution to sustainable development throughout the UNECE region”. The programme focuses on monitoring and analysis, promoting sustainable forest management, including through capacity building, and providing a forum for exchange on policies and topical issues. The programme has five work areas: markets and statistics, forest resource assessment, sector outlook studies, social and cultural aspects and policy and cross-sectoral aspects. The cross-sectoral dimension and the monitoring of policies and institutions have been strengthened in recent years.

The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS)³ was developed in 1994 to stop and reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity values in Europe, promoting the integration of biological and landscape diversity considerations into social and economic sectors. The Strategy reinforces the implementation of existing measures and identifies additional actions that need to be taken. The Strategy provides a framework to promote a consistent approach and common objectives for national and regional action to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity. To halt the loss of biodiversity in the Pan-European Region, catalytic actions have been defined with stakeholders, reflected in the PEBLDS Pan-European 2010 Biodiversity Implementation Plan.

The European Forest Institute (EFI)⁴ is an international organisation established by European States to conduct and advocate forest research, provide expert services and facilitate forest research networking at the pan-European level. The purpose of the Institute is to undertake research on the pan-European level on forest policy and governance, including its environmental aspects, on the ecology, multiple use, resources and health of European forests and on the supply of and demand for timber and other forest products and services in order to promote the conservation and sustainable management of forests in Europe.

There are many other institutions, processes and initiatives that work for European forests, notably the European Commission, the Europe and North Asia Forest Law

² <http://www.unece.org/timber>

³ <http://www.pebls.org>

⁴ <http://www.efi.fi>

Enforcement and Governance (ENA/FLEG) process, supported by the World Bank and other governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations.⁵

European forest organisations, institutions and processes have been cooperating for a long time, to complement areas of expertise according to their mandate. In particular:

- The political priorities identified by the MCPFE are taken into account by all organisations in designing their programmes;
- MCPFE in cooperation with UNECE/FAO jointly elaborated the report on the *State of Europe's Forests 2007*. The report assesses and analyses information collected according to the MCPFE criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management;
- Parts of the MCPFE Work Programme are implemented by UNECE/FAO, PEBLDS and EFI, each in their own area of comparative advantage;
- Increasingly EFI and UNECE/FAO are working together to provide policy relevant information and analysis for governments and stakeholders;
- MCPFE and UNECE/FAO regularly hold multi stakeholder dialogues on major forest sector policy issues. Both organisations encourage the regular participation of the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders in all aspects of the work. The private sector and NGOs actively contribute to the work programmes, through research, and active participation in conference, policy discussions, seminars and workshops;
- The MCPFE Liaison Unit participates in meetings of the Joint Bureau of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry commission and the two secretariats cooperate on the working basis;
- Exploring new ways of cooperating, the European Community, FAO, MCPFE and UNECE jointly organised a European Forest Week in October 2008, to increase the visibility of the forest based sector and its contribution to development of economy and society in Europe, as well as to raise awareness about its important contributions to mitigating climate change, providing freshwater and protecting the environment.

⁵ More information on regional forest organisations may be found in the discussion paper "International Forest Sector Institutions and Policy Instruments: A Sourcebook" at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/docs/dp/dp-43.pdf>.

MAJOR POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN EUROPE

The European region has a shared concept of the principles and practice of sustainable forest management, which is comprehensive and balanced. The provisions of this regional approach have been incorporated into national and local law in European countries, practice and institutions and results are monitored according to a common conceptual framework, at both national and regional levels.

Concept of sustainable forest management

After the Rio Summit the pan-European region responded to the global discussion on sustainable development by defining and promoting sustainable forest management⁶. At the MCPFE conference in 1993 the countries in Europe agreed that “*sustainable forest management*” means “*the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems*”. This concept was further developed through other political commitments, resolutions and declarations, including the policy guidelines for the sustainable management of forests in Europe⁷, and is accepted by many other organisations in Europe as a conceptual basis for their activities.

The concept of sustainable forest management in Europe also embodies forest protection⁸, reforestation and afforestation⁹ and degradation¹⁰. In this context, the MCPFE explicitly also recognises the interlinkages with the commitments expressed in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol¹¹.

The area of forests under sustainable management has further increased in the European region by almost 13 million since 1992, reflecting the effectiveness of policies and practices for sustainable forest management¹².

Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

Six criteria for sustainable forest management and a set of associated indicators were politically agreed in Europe in 1998¹³. The criteria and indicators aim to provide guidance for developing policies and to assess progress towards sustainable forest management.

The six pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management include: maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles; maintenance of forest ecosystems health and vitality; maintenance and

⁶ MCPFE, Helsinki Resolution 1 (1993)

⁷ General Guidelines for the sustainable management of forests in Europe, MCPFE, Helsinki Resolution 1 (1993)

⁸ MCPFE, Helsinki Resolution 1, General Guideline 6

⁹ MCPFE, Helsinki Resolution 1, General Guideline 8, Future Action 14

¹⁰ MCPFE, Helsinki Resolution 1, General Guideline 1

¹¹ MCPFE, Vienna Resolution 5 and Vienna Resolution 4, Annex 1, (2003)

¹² State of Europe's Forests 2007

¹³ MCPFE, Lisbon Resolution 2, (1998)

encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood); maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems; maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water); and maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions.

The indicators were further improved and endorsed by the ministers as “Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management” in 2003.¹⁴ They have been used as a basis for information collection, analysis and reporting at the national and regional level, most recently in the report *State of Europe's Forests 2007*.

Operational level guidelines for sustainable forest management

A framework of recommendations for sustainable forest management for practical use on a ground level was developed and endorsed as the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management (PEOLG)¹⁵. These guidelines comprise “Guidelines for Forest Management and Planning” and “Guidelines for Forest Management Practices”.

Common approach to national forest programmes in Europe

An MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe has been politically agreed¹⁶. There is a common understanding among the European countries on national forest programmes as participatory, holistic, inter-sectoral and iterative processes of policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at national and/or sub-national level. National forest programmes are frameworks for continuous work towards the further improvement of sustainable forest management at the national level and for cross-sectoral coordination, and as means for coherent implementation of forest related international commitments, including the UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD and the UNFF commitments.

Sustainable forest management and ecosystem approach

Following a dialogue between the European forest and biodiversity sectors to clarify the conceptual basis of the ecosystem approach in relation to sustainable forest management, it was agreed that the pan-European concept of sustainable forest management is consistent with the application of the ecosystem approach (as defined by CBD) to forest ecosystems in the pan-European region. The MCPFE tools¹⁷ are considered as appropriate for implementing the ecosystem approach in Europe's forests¹⁸.

¹⁴ MCPFE, Vienna Declaration, (2003)

¹⁵ MCPFE Lisbon Resolution 2, (1998)

¹⁶ MCPFE, Annex to Vienna Resolution 1: Strengthening synergies for sustainable forest management in Europe through cross-sectoral cooperation and national forest programmes (2003)

¹⁷ The MCPFE Work Programmes, the Framework for Cooperation between the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/PEBLDS, national forest programmes, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and PEOLG

¹⁸ Joint position of the MCPFE and the Efe/PEBLDS on the pan-European understanding on the linkage between the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management, 2005 – 2006

Sustainable development of the forest-based sector

The EU Strategy for Sustainable Development expressed the need “to judge how policies contribute to sustainable development”. A number of studies and analytical tools have been developed to support this objective. Not only forest production but the whole forest-based sector including the production chains using wood resources should increase their sustainability performance. Ex-ante sustainability impact assessment methods are currently under development in EU funded projects like EFORWOOD and SENSOR with active involvement of EFI. Within EFORWOOD, EFI is developing an integrated impact assessment tool for the forest-wood-chain: the Tool for Sustainability Impact Assessment (ToSIA). The UNECE/FAO regional forest sector outlook studies¹⁹ bring together forward-looking analysis in a consistent framework, as decision making support for countries that are developing policies for sustainable management of the sector as a whole.

Science – policy interaction

One of the leading principles in the co-operation and collaboration between pan-European processes, institutions and organisations has been actively to strengthen science-policy interaction. Mechanisms and tools for this purpose include joint policy relevant events and workshops as specified e.g. in the MCPFE Work Programme or organised by collaborating organisations including leading stakeholder groups. The aim has been to promote more structured dialogue and interaction between policy making processes and the science community.

Multi-stakeholder dialogues held at both the Vienna and the Warsaw Ministerial Conferences, where EFI acted as focal point for the global science community, including also IUFRO, IIASA, UNU and Bioversity International, has served this purpose as well. EFI's Advocacy Strategy identifies several tools, such as Policy Briefs, to further improve the interaction and communication between MCPFE, UNFF, UNECE/FAO, EU and other key actors.

Contribution to the NLBI

The pan-European process of cooperation on forests described in this note is a regional contribution to the implementation of global commitments, including the Non-legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI). The main purpose of the NLBI is to strengthen the political commitment and action at all levels to implement effectively sustainable management of all types of forests and to achieve the shared global objectives on forests. Forty five commitments out of 60 operational paragraphs of the NLBI are of full relevance to the MCPFE. Of these 45 fully relevant commitments, the MCPFE already contributes to the implementation of 37 commitments, through its ministerial declarations and resolutions.

¹⁹ Most recently: European Forest Sector Outlook Study, UNECE/FAO, 2005. A new study is under preparation.

SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS OF THE UNFF8

According to the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the UNFF, its eighth session in April 2009 will address, among its agenda items, *forests in a changing environment*. This will include thematic issues on: forests and climate change, reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification including low forest cover countries, and forest and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas.

As part of the MCPFE Work Programme, the government of Finland organised a pan-European workshop “Forests in the changing environment”, which was held on 3 - 5 September 2008 in Koli, Finland. The Koli workshop:

- (i) explored what are the priority issues related to the role of forests and sustainable forest management in the changing environment: climate change, loss of forest cover, forest degradation, desertification, biodiversity, protected areas;
- (ii) shared views on how to address these priority issues;
- (iii) discussed how to ensure coherent actions at the national, regional and global levels; and
- (iv) provided a basis for a regional contribution to the work of the UNFF.

The workshop recognized that UNFF8 issues are closely interrelated and recommendations were clustered in following priority areas for future work²⁰:

- Promoting and communicating the role of forests in sustainable development;
- Mainstreaming of sustainable forest management;
- Strengthening coordination and collaboration;
- Improving forest governance;
- Promoting wise use of forest products and bioenergy;
- Addressing climate change impacts, risks and adaptation;
- Improving monitoring and terminology; and
- Developing economic valuation of the multiple products and services of forests.

a. FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Background

Forests, sustainable forest management and forest products play a vital role in climate change mitigation. Growing forests sequester and store carbon, while wood products continue to store carbon through their life time. Forest products can substitute products with higher greenhouse gas emissions, and wood is an important source of renewable energy.

The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report underlined that, “*in the long term, sustainable management of forests will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit*”. To achieve these benefits, sustainable forest management should aim at maintaining or

²⁰ Full text of the workshop report:
http://www.mmm.fi/attachments/5eWDJqAqB/5ATU4akRI/Files/CurrentFile/Koli_workshop_report_final.pdf

increasing forest carbon stocks, while also producing an annual yield of timber, fiber or energy from the forest.

The total growing stock of forests in Europe amounts to 112 billion m³. In the last 15 years, an average of 358 million of m³ has been added each year, according to the *State of Europe's Forests 2007*. In forest biomass 53 gigatonnes of carbon are stored, which is an increase of 2 gigatonnes since 1990. Further substantial amounts of carbon are stored in forest litter and soils, as well as in forest products, but knowledge on these components remains limited.

Main policy commitments

Policy tools for promoting and implementing sustainable forest management in the region have been developed and implemented for many years. The role of forests and sustainable forest management in addressing challenges related to climate change has been a central topic²¹ since this issue emerged in the 1990s.

By adopting the Warsaw Declaration and Warsaw Resolution 1 at the Warsaw Conference (2007), ministers responsible for forests recognised the role of forests, sustainable forest management and forest products in climate change mitigation and the ongoing need for adaptation to climate change. They expressed their commitments to ensure that forests and sustainable forest management play an active role in combating the negative effects of climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures.

Many European countries already have in place carbon related policies in the forest sector. According to the *State of Europe's Forests 2007* carbon-related policies are mainly focused on the promotion of bioenergy and to a lesser degree on carbon sequestration or adaptation of forests to climate change. In the context of the Kyoto Protocol, 21 European countries have chosen to account for forest management under article 3.4 of the Protocol and there are several JI and CDM projects linked to forests, inside and outside Europe.

Plans for future actions

Climate change related issues are given high priority in the work programmes of MCPFE, UNECE/FAO, PEBLDS and EFI. Activities related to sustainable forest management and climate change aim to provide a strategic contribution towards the decisions that will be taken in the framework of the UNFCCC in the next years. Key activities are highlighted below:

- An MCPFE open ended ad-hoc working group on “sustainability criteria” for forest biomass production, including bioenergy has been established. The aim of the working group is to examine the applicability and carry out a gap analysis of the existing MCPFE tools for SFM in the context of new developments and processes addressing sustainable production of forest biomass;
- The MCPFE and PEBLDS developed “Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation with a special focus on the provisions of the UNFCCC” at the drafting meeting organised by the government of Ireland in Malahide, Ireland on 16-17 September, 2008. The Guidelines were adopted by the PEBLDS Bureau on behalf of the PEBLDS Council on 4 November, 2008 and by the MCPFE ELM on

²¹ Climate change and forests were addressed in MCPFE Strasbourg Resolution 4 (1990), Helsinki Resolution 4 (1993), Vienna Declaration and Vienna Resolution 5 (2003)

its meeting on 12-13 November, 2008. The Guidelines can be used as a set of recommendations for consideration in afforestation and reforestation programmes that aim *inter alia* at carbon sequestration and reduction of CO₂ emissions, including woody biomass production;

- An analysis of pan-European challenges in forest adaptation to climate change (building on the global report by IUFRO) is ongoing;
- The ministers of environment at the 6th Ministerial Conference *Environment for Europe* (Belgrade Conference, 2007) recognised the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change, notably the impact of climate change on species and habitats, on the migratory patterns of species, and on the European landscape and stressed the need for an intersectoral approach to climate change. They committed to the continued support of the Pan-European Ecological Network as an important mechanism for adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects;
- EFI has been involved in several European projects assessing potential impacts of climate change on European forests and investigating silvicultural response options (ATEAM, SILVISTRAT, LTEEF I and II, SILVICS). Currently, EFI is leading a “Study on impacts of climate change on European forests and options for adaptation” for DG Agriculture and Rural Development. The study is reviewing and synthesising the existing knowledge about observed and projected impacts of climate change on forests in different European regions. It assesses the adaptive capacity of the forest sector, and reviews potential adaptation measures to respond to climate change. In addition, a survey was carried out to document on-going and planned national strategies for adapting forests and forestry to climate change in the EU 27 Member states. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations will be given how adaptation to climate change can be supported;
- UNECE/FAO has worked on many climate change related issues, including the estimation of supply and consumption of wood energy, wood resources balances, the mobilisation of wood from all sources²² in the region, potential sustainable wood supply, carbon flows, the role of harvested wood products in the context of climate change policy. In future UNECE/FAO will work further, in collaboration with MCPFE and other partners, to provide consistent data, information and policy messages on climate change, establish a mechanism to provide information and facilitate exchange of experiences related to forests and climate change in the region, and develop a strategy to raise awareness of the contribution of forests and forest products to climate change mitigation.

b. FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, INCLUDING PROTECTED AREAS

Background

About 3 percent of Europe’s forests are protected with the main objective of conservation of biodiversity (8.1% if Russia’s vast forest area is excluded) and another 1.7 percent with the main objective of conserving landscapes and specific natural elements. According to the *State of Europe’s Forests 2007*, about 70% of the European forests are classified as

²² From forests, trees outside the forest, industry co-products and recovered wood products.

semi-natural and about 4% as plantations, while the remaining 26%, located mainly in Eastern and Northern European countries, are considered undisturbed. Over the years, forest management practices in European countries have changed in ways that promote the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, notably through the increased natural regeneration and more mixed species stands. Measures are also being taken to encourage deadwood accumulation. The area of protected forests has expanded by about 2 million ha in the last 5 years.

Main policy commitments

It is recognised in Europe that the conservation of forest biodiversity in all types of forests is an essential element of their sustainable management.²³ Specifically, it is emphasised that conservation and the appropriate enhancement of biological diversity should be adequately addressed, together with other objectives set for forests, in forestry policies and legislations. Several specific tools for SFM in Europe are relevant for enhancing forest biodiversity²⁴. European countries also agreed to strive for coordinated implementation of the Expanded Programme of Work on forest biological diversity of the CBD and the Proposals for Action of the IPF/IFF at all levels.

In 2003, the ministers of environment and heads of delegation endorsed the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity submitted by the Council of the PEBLDS at the 5th Ministerial Conference *Environment for Europe*. The overall objective of the resolution is to halt the loss of biological diversity in the pan European region by the year 2010. The governments agreed to work towards this goal through concerted actions and a joint commitment to achieve key targets in several areas, including *forest biodiversity*. Under the key target on forest biodiversity, the environment Ministers committed to contribute to the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity of the CBD in the pan European region by 2008. This will be done through, *inter alia*, implementation of the Framework for Co-operation between the MCPFE and EfE/PEBLDS, national forest programmes according to the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe and through application of the ecosystem approach.

Close cooperation between the MCPFE and the EfE/PEBLDS, primarily through the Work Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000 and the Framework of Cooperation between MCPFE and EfE/PEBLDS is recognised in the region as a good example of cross-sectoral cooperation between forestry and biodiversity sectors for the benefits of the conservation of forest biological diversity in Europe.

Main challenges

At the 6th Ministerial Conference *Environment for Europe* in Belgrade in 2007, an assessment of the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity was presented to the Ministers of Environment. The assessment found that there was progress in the conservation of forest biodiversity, but in some countries forest biodiversity remains threatened by fragmentation and illegal logging. Also, in some countries lack of capacity and funding for implementing targets and strategies was identified. “*Europe’s*

²³ MCPFE, Helsinki Resolution 1 (1993)

²⁴ Criterion 4, Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management, MCPFE Vienna Resolution 4 (2003), MCPFE Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and Other Wooded Land in Europe (2003).

Environment-the 4th Assessment” published for the Belgrade Conference by the European Environment Agency concludes that the main pressures on biodiversity are urban sprawl, infrastructure development, acidification, eutrophication, desertification, overexploitation, and intensification of agriculture and land abandonment.

The same report states that climate change is increasingly recognised as a serious threat, particularly to coastal, arctic and alpine habitats and species. Although there has been significant progress in creating ecological networks, there is little information on the conservation status of these networks.

A European Environment Agency Report “*European forests – ecosystem conditions and sustainable use*” (2008) stressed that Europe needs more research and data exchange. It outlined several challenges ahead vis-à-vis the target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The challenges highlighted in the report concern (1) the development of frameworks capable to address multiple demands on forests in a changing society while preserving biodiversity in the wake of an increasing demand for wood resources, (2) strengthening the knowledge base on benefits and risks of genetically modified trees, and (3) comprehensive target setting for protection of species and forest types.

National forest programmes that link sustainable forest management with an ecosystem approach are being implemented and the annual harvest of wood remains well below its annual increment, and primary forests (those hardly affected by human activity) make up about a quarter of the total forest area. However, illegal logging and human-induced forest fires are a growing problem, particularly in South East Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Invasive alien species are increasing in the pan-European region and although the problem is recognised in most countries and strategic action is being taken, the efficiency of control measures needs to be increased by better monitoring and early warning systems.

Plans for future actions

Within the MCPFE Work Programme it is planned to contribute to the implementation of the relevant programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular the Expanded Work Programme on Forest Biological Diversity, and to continue to contribute to the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Target. It is planned to organise a workshop on sustainable forest management in the context of the CBD and the pan-European 2010 Target.

The MCPFE and the EfE/PEBLDS will finalise the elaboration of pan-European guidelines for afforestation and reforestation guidelines, including ecological guidelines.

The EFI will continue contributing to pan-European (e.g. EEA, EfE, MCPFE) and global environmental assessments (UNEP) to provide state-of-the art scientific overview to the state of forests and forest research in Europe, together with the major European stakeholders and basing on expertise in its extensive network of expert organisations.

UNECE/FAO will continue to monitor trends in forest biodiversity, and analyse the interaction of policy for biodiversity with other policies for sustainable forest management, in the context of the long term sector outlook studies.

c. PREVENTING FOREST DEGRADATION IN ALL TYPES OF FORESTS AND COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

Background and main policy commitments

Over 1 billion ha, 25% of the world's forests, are in Europe. The area of forests in Europe has increased by almost 13 million ha in the past 15 years mainly due to planting of new forests and the natural expansion of forests into former agricultural land, and it continues to increase²⁵.

Preventing forest degradation was a major driver behind the establishment of the pan-European process. Conscious that acid rains, atmospheric pollution, forest fires, global warming, major climatic events, or industrial accidents, erosion, damage caused by pests were threatening Europe's forests and being concerned that the deterioration of forests throughout Europe could lead to threats to the economic, ecological, social and cultural values of forests, the First Ministerial Conference was launched in Strasbourg, France, in 1990²⁶. Through the ministerial commitments made in Helsinki, Lisbon, Vienna and Warsaw, the MCPFE has continued to address urgent issues that might impact forest conditions in Europe, most recently climate change and forest fires at Warsaw in 2007.

Challenges

Although air quality in Europe has improved, trees are still under stress. Further reduction in emissions is needed to improve ecosystems health and vitality. According to the State of Europe's Forests Report 2007, tree crown condition has stabilised, but defoliation levels are still high in more regions of Europe, indicating that trees have a reduced potential to withstand adverse environmental impacts. Further reduction of related emissions is needed to bring deposition below critical loads.

Forests in Europe have suffered severe storm damages, and forest fires continue to be a major challenge. Since 1990, large storm damages have occurred in Europe almost annually. Hundreds of thousands of hectares are burned annually. The number of forest fires increased, but the area burnt did not in the period of 2000-2005, mainly due to more effective fire suppression in many countries.

Plan for future actions

At the Warsaw Conference (2007), the European ministers responsible for forests decided to strengthen the cooperation between the MCPFE and the UNCCD and to take measures to enhance the role of forests in combating desertification and combating floods. At the same conference, in the Ministerial Statement, the ministers expressed their readiness to explore further measures to prevent forest fires and to restore the economic, social and ecological potential of the areas in Southern Europe, affected by forest fires.

²⁵ State of Europe's Forests Report 2007

²⁶ Six Ministerial Resolutions were adopted in order to provide a platform for joint Pan-European work on preventing forest degradation in the region. In particular, MCPFE Strasbourg Resolution 1: European Network of Permanent Sample Plots for Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems and MCPFE Strasbourg Resolution 6: European Network for Research into Forest Ecosystems formed a basis for actions on monitoring the condition of forests in Europe.

Trends in forest degradation and desertification will be monitored by UNECE/FAO, MCPFE and other partners in the context of regular assessment exercises, according to the framework of indicators of sustainable forest management.

d. CROSS – CUTTING ISSUES

FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND TRADE

Background

Illegal logging and related trade causes economic loss of revenues and plays a role in deforestation, forest degradation and loss of biodiversity. It also decreases the value of forests, including social and cultural values. Hence, policies and actions within the areas of combating illegal activities, law enforcement, governance and trade are considered as cross-cutting and interrelated to the issues of climate change mitigation, conservation of forest biodiversity, including protected areas, as well as to preventing forest degradation.

Main policy commitments

The MCPFE has identified illegal harvesting as a critical issue and addressed measures to tackle the problem. The Signatory States and the European Community committed themselves to take effective measures to promote good governance and forest law enforcement, and to combat illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade²⁷.

They also expressed their commitment to contribute to international efforts to this end. It was also agreed to adjust policy and legal frameworks and instruments to support sound enabling conditions for sustainable forest management that encourage investment and economic activity in the forest sector, including effective measures for forest law enforcement and for combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade.²⁸

In 2005, the MCPFE conducted an analysis of information about the impact and underlying causes of illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade on forest biological diversity, as well as economic and social impacts of illegal harvesting in Europe²⁹.

MCPFE in cooperation with UNECE/FAO, the European Forest Institute, the European Commission and the Efe/ PEBLDS, as well as the Government of Spain conducted a workshop on “Combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade in Europe”, which built on an earlier UNECE/FAO workshop. The workshop objectives were to discuss and assess the different forms and causes of illegal logging in Europe; to present and discuss successful examples of combating (forest law enforcement, enforcement of license conditions, trade measures) or avoiding (adaptation of legislation for small scale use) illegal logging; to discuss a common understanding of illegal logging in the context of MCPFE and to outline the coordination in efforts between MCPFE, EU-FLEGT and the ENA/FLEG Ministerial Process.

²⁷ MCPFE Vienna Declaration (2003)

²⁸ MCPFE Vienna Resolution 2 and Vienna Resolution 4 (2003)

²⁹ Combating illegal harvesting and related trade of forest products in Europe, Warsaw, 2007

Ongoing activities and plans for future actions

In support of EU FLEGT Action Plan implementation, and in the spirit of MCPFE commitments, EFI has established and is managing the EU FLEGT Facility, financed by the Commission and Member States. The aim is to curb illegal logging in tropical wood producing countries. At the centre of the Action Plan are bilateral agreements between exporting countries and EU. The objective of these voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) is that only legal and licensed timber enters EU markets. The EU FLEGT Facility provides specific country-level technical assistance to governments and stakeholders, and supports the negotiation processes through expert services. In addition, the Facility's core areas of work are policy analysis, facilitation and communication. The Action, with the support of the Facility, contributes to improving forest governance, poverty eradication and to combat deforestation and forest degradation.

EFI's capacity building project FOPER, Forest Policy and Economics Education and Research, currently implemented in Western Balkan region, contributes to long-term governance and forest policy development processes in countries with economies in transition, and hence supports earlier MCPFE commitments.

In the Warsaw Declaration (2007), the ministers committed to further work for strengthening efforts to promote good governance and forest law enforcement to combat illegal logging and related trade of forest products, inter alia by cooperating on and promoting public procurement policies that demand timber and timber products from legal and sustainable sources. It was also agreed that the European region will support FLEG ministerial processes and enhance collaboration between the MCPFE and the Europe and North Asia FLEG. A meeting of experts on forest law enforcement and governance was arranged in Bucharest, Romania, in October 2008³⁰ to assess progress and lessons learned.

The EU FLEGT Facility, hosted by EFI, will continue to support formal VPA negotiations with Malaysia, Indonesia, Cameroon and Republic of Congo. In addition, interest in FLEGT issues or to start negotiation processes, have been expressed by several other African and East Asian countries.

³⁰ Full text of workshop report: <http://www.mapam.ro/pages/page.php?catid=02>