

## **Contribution to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development by the Economic Commission for Europe's Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry**

The UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) covers 43% of the world forest and over 60% of global wood production. Its work is therefore crucial to address the sustainable management of forests. A number of important Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are thereby addressed. For instance, SDG 15 to 'protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss' and SDG 13, as the programme "promotes action to combat climate change and its impacts" and addresses both mitigation and adaptation of forests to climate change. Given its focus also on the forest industry, the work of COFFI makes an important contribution to the achievement of SDG 12 to 'ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns', as it supports the sustainable use of wood and wood-derivate products and services as a sound alternative to other materials and products that have demonstrated to have a large ecological footprint. It also contributes to SDG 7, as it addresses wood energy (the primary renewable energy in the region) to 'ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all' and SDG 6 on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by focusing its work on the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems.

Past efforts of the COFFI have directly contributed to the various SDG targets. For instance, the publication of "Forests in the ECE Region", a study on the trends and challenges in achieving the Global Objectives on Forests. This study identified opportunities for the forest industry and policy-makers to further strengthen their efforts to advance SDG 15 by advancing sustainable forest management and forest protection. The past International Day of Forests 2016 was dedicated to the theme of "Forests and Water" as decided by United Nations Forum on Forests and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The celebrations consisted of a half-day event that raised awareness on the multiple links between forests and water sources, thereby drawing attention to SDG 6. On the same topic, COFFI recently published a comprehensive study and accompanying database on forest-related payments for watershed services schemes. With the publication of the joint Wood Energy Enquiry in 2013, SDG 7 was embraced by helping policymakers to assess and evaluate the important role that wood plays as a source of renewable source of energy.

The main future contribution of COFFI is carried out through its Integrated Programme of Work together with FAO. At the joint session of the ECE COFFI and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), which was held 9-13 October 2017 in Warsaw, Poland, the "Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work" was adopted. The Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work is an ambitious work programme for 2018-2021, which takes into account the needs of Member States and stakeholders, and ensures that the critical role of forests for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals are embraced and receive due attention.

The scope of the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work encompasses the following main topics related to forests: the state of forests and the state of sustainable forest management; the implementation and promotion of sustainable forest management; forest related industries

and the use of forest products; forest and forest sector policies, institutions and instruments; and the contribution of the forest sector in the transition towards a green economy.

The first Work Area of data collection and reporting consists of the collection, validation and dissemination of statistics and other information on forests. These are used to analyse and assess the state of forests, the sustainability of forest sector management and the state of forest products markets. These activities feed directly into SDG target 15 and target 12, by providing reliable data and effective monitoring that is needed for the implementation of sustainable forestry management, and ensuring that natural resources are used efficiently.

In the second Work Area on policy dialogue and advice, emphasis is placed on the development of analyses, guidelines and recommendations as well as the organization of policy dialogues and workshops for the region. One of the major outputs of this Work Area is the presentation of Forest Sector Outlook Studies and the development and review of the policy-related part of ECE's and FAO's joint work. These activities relate to all previously mentioned SDG targets, where the involvement of and cooperation between different stakeholders, and policy-makers in particular, is a vital precondition for strengthening the contribution of forests to SDGs.

The third Working Area focuses on communication and outreach by providing a regional platform for international cooperation in forest-related communication; organizing events and campaigns (e.g. the International Day of Forests, the European and Global Forest Weeks); creating policy briefs, press briefs, the Forest Information Billboard, social media/networks, videos and ad hoc studies; contributing to the organization of relevant events in member countries; and lastly, organizing outreach activities beyond the forest sector for disseminating information that highlight relevance of forests and forest products and services to other sectors. This work area plays an important role in reaching the SDGs, because the more we communicate about our work and how it relates to the SDGs, the better we can ensure that all stakeholders share a common vision for a sustainable future.

Lastly, our work on capacity-building focuses on various themes, from national systems for forest monitoring and statistical reporting to forest communication strategies, and the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. In addition, capacities are expanded in order to enable stakeholders to participate in Forest Landscape Restoration, the Bonn Challenge and the implementation of the UN Plan for Forests 2017-2030. Again, these activities will promote all previously mentioned SDG targets as they encompass a range of relevant themes such as sustainable forest management, climate action, energy efficiency and responsible consumption and production.