



11 April 2018

## **Joint Statement on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe on the occasion of the Informal Meeting of EU Forest General Directors in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria**

Following a number of recent EU policy developments which give an increasingly important role to forests and the forest-based sector, we, as representatives of forest owners and managers, welcome the decision to discuss the future of the negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on forests.

While forests and the forest-based sector can significantly contribute towards achieving important sustainability objectives and goals, a clear and holistic approach to forests and the forest-based sector is crucial. Considering the increasing importance of forests, but also the emerging demands from other policy sectors such as climate change and bioeconomy, a coherent policy framework is needed. Consequently, European forest owners and managers wish to reiterate their previously expressed positions in support of a legal reference for sustainable forest management at pan-European level.

Constructively moving forward towards a LBA would provide a strong political signal and greatly support the European forest sector in enhancing its vitality and resilience and strengthening the implementation of sustainable forest management.

The Madrid Ministerial Decision has already recognized the draft negotiating text for an LBA as a good basis for further reflection towards a future European forest convention. Furthermore, the INC succeeded in reaching an agreement on all substantial forest-related elements and cannot be disregarded.

As representatives of forest owners and managers, we therefore call for a firm commitment and engagement from all responsible EU ministers and governments to provide strong leadership and guidance towards a future forest convention at pan-European level.

*EUSTA FOR – European State Forest Association*

*CEPF – Confederation of European Forest Owners*

*COPA-COGECA – European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperatives*