

8th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference
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EUSTAFOR Statement at Roundtable 2

Sustainable forest management - our joint answer to the vision of sustainable development

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Distinguished Chairperson, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of EUSTAFOR, representing 36 European State Forest Management Organizations, it is an honor to speak at the 8th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference organized jointly by the Ministers of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

This Ministerial Conference comes at an opportune time to debate how sustainable and multifunctional forest management can help to cope with all of today's emerging challenges. Over the last years, the crucial role of forests and the forest-based sector has been addressed in both EU and international sustainable development policy frameworks – the EU Green Deal, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and climate and biodiversity conventions, and other related processes. In parallel, we have observed a dynamic evolution in the public perception of – and societal attitudes towards – forests.

European state forests share the 2030 vision, goals and targets for European forests embedded in the commitments of this ministerial conference, while emphasizing the need for forest policy to offer optimal solutions to practitioners in the field.

EUSTAFOR has three messages for this conference.

1. Sustainable and multi-purpose forestry needs a solid economic basis

Sustainable and multifunctional forestry is considered to be the solution to balance the complex and, sometimes, conflicting sets of demands on forests. The current societal debate opposing the active management of forests ignores the fact that a viable forest economy – including monetary aspects – is a precondition for the delivery of all other functions. In addition, financing will be needed to cope with the impact of climate change on forests.

2. Healthy and resilient forests are an important part of the solution to climate mitigation and carbon

The oversimplified view of seeing forests exclusively as carbon sinks, while ignoring their role in carbon storage (in harvested wood products) and as a substitute for fossil-based materials and energy, must be supplanted. Using wood boosts the bioeconomy and helps to defossilize Europe.

Due to the significant impact of climate change on the health and growth of forests, the pan-European forest policy must also address topics such as adaptive forest management.

3. Sustainable forest management conserves and improves biodiversity

European forests provide a home for biodiversity and nature at a scale that cannot be offered by any other land use. It is well known that sustainable forest management is not only compatible with the conservation of biodiversity and nature but, in most cases, actively contributes to its maintenance and enhancement.

Distinguished Chairperson, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The future of European forests – with their long life cycle – depends on the political and managerial decisions that are made today. We fully share the ministerial commitments of this conference. With our knowledge and expertise, we will actively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how Europe's forests can help to accomplish the multiple ambitions of sustainable development and a future-fit Europe.

Thank you for your attention.