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Following the written contributions from delegations and the informal meeting of Friends of the Presidency on 14 October 2021, delegations will find in annex a 3rd *revised* draft of Council Conclusions on the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030.

Compared with the previous version, deletions are marked as ~~strikethrough~~ and new text as **bold and underlined**.

Delegations are invited to inform the Presidency and the Council Secretariat by Thursday 21 October 2021 on major issues of concern.

ANNEX

***Further revised* draft Council Conclusions on**

**The new EU Forest Strategy for 2030**

The Council of the European Union

* 1. RECALLING the Council Conclusions of 10 November2020 on *Perspectives for the EU forest-related policies and EU forest strategy post 2020[[1]](#footnote-1)*, of 15 April 2019 *on the progress on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy and on a new strategic framework for forests[[2]](#footnote-2),* *of 16 December 2019 on Stepping Up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests[[3]](#footnote-3)*, of 10 June 2021 on the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change[[4]](#footnote-4), of 17 December 2020 on Making the Recovery Circular and Green, of 29 November 2019 on the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy[[5]](#footnote-5)and of 23 October 2020 *on the Biodiversity Strategy - the need for urgent action[[6]](#footnote-6)*.
  2. RECOGNIZING the leading role of the FOREST EUROPE ministerial process in developing dialogue, principles**, indicators** and definitions related to the multifunctional role offorestsandtheirsustainable management**,** and RECALLING the FOREST EUROPE Resolutions and Declarations, signed by all EU Member States and the European Commission on behalf of the European Union**, in particular the shared vision for European forests 2030 set out in the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration “The Future We Want: The Forests We Need**[[7]](#footnote-7)**”**
  3. UNDERLINING that Member States have, according to their respective forest policies, developed and implemented national forest strategies, programs, tools, and other sustainable forest management related instruments.
  4. RECOGNIZING that Sustainable forest management (SFM), as defined by FOREST EUROPE following the Forest Principles[[8]](#footnote-8), is a dynamic and evolving concept, providing a framework for balancing the provision and enhancement of ecological, economic, and social services of forests and forest ecosystems to contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development and thus promoting the multiple functions of forests.
  5. STRESSING the importance of SFMas a nature-based solutioncatering multiple goals for the maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to the global carbon cycle, the health, vitality and resilience of forest ecosystems, the conservation, ~~and~~ restoration **and sustainable use** of biological diversity**, the** ~~and~~ protective functions - **especially in the face of the impact of climate change-** ~~as well as~~**and** the productive and other socio-economic functions of forests.

**5a** *(former 22b*) HIGHLIGHTS the essential role of forests for human health and wellbeing, and the need to promote the “One Health” approach which recognises the intrinsic connection between human health, animal health and healthy nature and REQUESTING to look deeper into the role of forests and SFM in the One Health Approach and enhance the contribution of forests, nature areas and public parks for the wellbeing of people since the COVID 19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for enhancing the greening of the urbanised areas.

**Holistic approach and framework for forests**

* 1. ~~NOTES /WELCOMES~~ ACKNOWLEDGES the **publication of the** Communication of the Commission on the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030, and its increased ambition for the contribution of forests through their multifunctional roleto the European Green Deal and to forest-related global goals and targets, including those ofAgenda 2030. **EMPHASIZES the fact ~~/~~** ~~SHARES~~ ~~the view~~ that the forestsand the forest-based sector can play a key role in the EU’s transition to a green,sustainable, **climate neutral** and competitive circular bio-economy.
  2. RECALLS that a comprehensive framework for the sector is needed, taking into account all three dimensions of sustainability in a balanced and holistic way, HIGHLIGHTS the need for coherence between the different EU forest related policies, goals and instruments **affecting forests related issues ~~/~~** ~~[regarding the sustainable forest management~~~~at EU level]~~ and the connection with the existing international processes. EXPRESSES CONCERN that the Strategy lacks a balanced vision on the different dimensions of sustainability. Regarding the implementation of the Strategy, HIGHLIGHTS the need to strengthen the socio-economic **goals ~~and~~** ~~to define the new introduced concepts~~ **in the EU Forest Strategy** and to set clear steps for future cooperation of the Commission and the Member States.

7a. STRESSES the important role of the forests in the EU in the fight against biodiversity loss and climate change, including through enhanced climate **mitigation and** adaptation measures.RECALLS the ongoing work on defining, mapping and protecting the remaining ~~EU~~ primary and old growth forests **in the EU which has to take into account the necessity of ensuring forest ecosystems resilience and should be based on a thorough socio-economic impact assessment**.REGRETS that the aspects of desertification and of forests’ hydrological function are missing in the Strategy.

* 1. WELCOMESthe emphasis on the **promotion** ~~importance~~ of sustainably produced wood-based products, especially long lived ones, and at the same time RECALLS that resource efficient production and use of forest-based products, including long and short-lived ones, contribute to the climate ~~and biodiversity~~ goals, to the circular bio-economy, to a **sustainable** post-pandemic economic recovery and to rural development. In this regard, STRESSES the need to further promote sustainable production and consumption, investments and sustainability-oriented procurement policies along the whole value chain**, especially with regard to enhancing resource efficiency and circular economy.** ~~[CALLS INTO QUESTION whether detailed regulation on the cascading principle ensures resource efficiency.]~~

9. ~~WELCOMES~~ **/STRESSES** the recognition of forests as a provider of livelihoods and important ecosystem services. HIGHLIGHTS the need to further develop, in close cooperation between the Commission and Member States, concrete socio-economic ~~[activities]~~ **~~/~~**goals in the Strategy**, as part of a common implementation work programme.** ENCOURAGES the full involvement of forest owners and forest managers in delivering on the Strategy’s objectives, including in supporting the development of rural areas to address rural depopulation and revitalization.

10. EMPHASISES the need to make use of available financial mechanisms and incentives**, including for valuation and remuneration of forest ecosystem services.** INVITES the Commission , together with Member States, to explore options for new innovativemarket based solutions**,** such as payments for ecosystem services, **among others, those related to**~~[with clear steering effects, such as~~~~for~~ climate change mitigation **and adaptation** and~~for~~ biodiversity, **including solutions for advancing close-to-nature forestry and carbon farming,** while limiting ~~to a reasonable extent~~ the administrative burden for forest owners and managers, as well as for public administrations.

12. DRAWS ATTENTION to the fact that a one-size fits all approach to forests in the EU may prove counterproductive. EMPHASISES the need to recognise, respectand maintain the diversity and specificities of ~~forests and their~~ **forest** ecosystems, of forest coverage, management and silvicultural practices, ownership, **legal and organisational structures,** cultural and historical developments, etc. among Member States and regions, including the Outermost Regions.

13. STRESSES the importance of Member States’ competence in forestry **and forest policy and in this regard REITERATES the Council Conclusions of 10 November 2020 on *Perspectives for the EU forest-related policies and EU forest strategy post 2020****[[9]](#footnote-9)***.** ~~REITERATES that although the EU has a variety of forest-related policies, the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU makes no reference to a common EU forest policy, the responsibility for forests lies with the Member States and all forest-related decisions and policies in the EU must respect the principle of proportionality and subsidiarity and Member States’ competence in this field.~~

13a. **REGRETS that the new EU Forest Strategy was prepared without substantial cooperation with the Member States and** forest stakeholders, ~~EXPRESSES willingness and readiness to cooperate~~ **~~with the Commission~~** and RECOGNIZES that there is shared interest in working together **on implementing the New** **EU-forest Strategy 2030**~~on forest-related matters~~ in an integrated manner. **In this regards, STRESSES the importance of cooperation, coordination and joint activities between Member States, the European Commission as well as other important partners in the pan- European region on forest policy related matter.**

14. NOTES the initiative for a legislative proposal for a Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection framework, **including mandatory Member States** Strategic Plans for Forests, CALLS **on the Commission** for assessment of proportionality and subsidiarity, **while ensuring cost-effectiveness and avoiding duplication and additional administrative burden,** and for further clarifications on how the initiative will affect and interact with current national legislations and tools.~~Furthermore, QUESTIONS the added value of the foreseen Strategic Plans for Forests.~~

**14.0.** **Furthermore, QUESTIONS the added-value of the foreseen Strategic Plans for Forests and** ~~REMINDS~~ **RECALLS** the need to acknowledge the **already** existing **comprehensive** national forest programmes or strategies ~~and their related competence~~, **developed according to internationally agreed commitments, such as the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and the FOREST EUROPE Vienna Resolution, and their related Member States competencies**.

14a. **UNDERLINES the need for a sound and transparent data and information base on forests as a basis for policy-making**. RECALLS that data collection, processing, ~~and~~ reporting and interpretation should **make best and most effective use of**~~rely~~ ~~on~~existing national forest inventories and related international cooperation such as, among others, FAO FRA, State of Europe’s Forests and the ENFIN network. **CALLS on the Commission to set up a Member States expert group designed to analyse the currently existing discrepancies and possible gaps in forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting .**

15. **IS** CONVINCED that full advantage should be taken of existing definitions and indicators developed in international and regional processes such as FOREST EUROPE, which should be fully used for monitoring **and reporting on the conditions of****~~[~~**~~the situation in~~**~~]~~** ~~the~~ forests in the EU. INVITES the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States, and with the support of research networks in the European forest-science partnership, to carry out an assessment and to decide together on whether new EU level indicators, thresholds or ranges for SFM are needed **and on what their added value would be**. **Furthermore, taking into account forests differences between countries, these thresholds or ranges must be decided and set at national level or sub-national level.**

16. WELCOMES the Strategy's attention to the need for solutions to strengthen forests’ resilience. RECOGNISES the negative impacts on forests from and the risks posed by natural disasters and other disturbing factors which ~~will~~ **are likely to** be aggravated by climate change. CALLS on the Commission to work closely with Member States to strengthen the work on the risk management related to forest **disasters and forest disturbing** factors of natural disasters and on the adaption to climate change in order to develop a structured and integrated approach, taking into account effective cooperation and experience-sharing platforms with Member States' administrations and stakeholders and considering the ongoing work of FOREST EUROPE towards a forest risk knowledge mechanism.

17. UNDERLINES that research and innovation are important drivers in achieving the goals of the Strategy. CALLS for stronger cooperation on research and innovation planning and activities to boost, inter alia, the use of sustainably produced wood and other forest products in the circular bio-economy, as well as the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation and **to adaptation and biodiversity objectives**. WELCOMES the establishment of the Research and Innovationpartnership on forestry, while ensuring that the partnerships work is carried out in coherence with the work of existing international organisations, ~~such as the European Forest Institute and the European Forest-based Sector Technology Platform~~.

18. AGREES to the need for an inclusive approach and good coordination between EU forest relevant ~~advisory~~ bodies ~~and UNDERLINES that the composition of any new or merged EU advisory committee or body should respect the national decision on participants of delegations.~~] PROPOSES that the Standing Forestry Committee **(**SFC**)** remains the **main** forum for Member States’ representatives and the Commission, to discuss and advise on forest-related topics at EU leveland to continue to play a key role in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy. ENCOURAGES full involvement of the relevant stakeholders, especially forest owners and managers, inthe consultations **preparing the implementation and** in the Strategy implementation **itself** ~~of the Strategy~~. CALLS for a constructive dialogue and collaborative work between the Commission, Member States, and the relevant stakeholders **as well as the civil society.**

19. INVITES the Commission to developtogether with the Member States at the Standing Forestry Committee an Annual Work Plan with concrete work streams, including forest resilience and climate **change effects** ~~resilience~~, circular bio-economy and forest biodiversity and ecosystem services, while also ensuring inputs from other Commission ~~relevant /~~forest-relatedgroups.

20. **URGES that the added value to already existing voluntary certification schemes for SFM should be a precondition for any consideration of introducing new certification schemes.** ~~EXPRESSES doubts on~~ ~~the need~~ ~~for~~ **EMPHASIZES the importance** **to clarify** **the need for** new EU “closer-to-nature” certification schemes and **their demonstrable added value**. UNDERLINES that this may cause additional administrative burden and costs, potential confusion to consumers andoverlaps with existing forest certifications schemes.

**20a. REITERATES the need to step up EU action to counter deforestation and forest degradation, as well as implementation and enforcement of relevant existing EU regulation and LOOKS FORWARD to receiving the fitness check on the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT Regulation, and the Commission's legal proposal on minimising the risk of deforestation and forest degradation associated with products placed on the EU market.**

**21.** STRESSES that, **by successfully implementing a comprehensive Forest Strategy,** the EU and its Member States can **continue to** play a leading role in promoting SFM and halting deforestation at global level in various international fora, such as the United Nations Forum on Forests, the FAO COFO, as well as in regional organisations and processes like FOREST EUROPE, UNECE and the FAO European Forestry Commission. REGRETS that the new EU Forest Strategy omits this international dimension ~~and a reflection~~~~on the possible leakage effects in non- EU~~~~countries~~~~of the~~~~measures~~~~proposed measures in the Strategy~~**~~.~~**

**21a.0 NOTES that the strategy is not clear on its impact on forests outside the EU, as well as on how to avoid that the proposed protection measures for the forests in the EU do not result in a higher footprint and possible negative impacts on forests outside the EU, especially on primary forests, due to higher timber or wood imports. Therefore, REQUESTS the Commission to draft an Impact Assessment and to propose measures to avoid these negative impacts.**

**21a.1 ENCOURAGES the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation and in delivering on the Strategy objectives. HIGHLIGHTS in relation to the role of indigenous peoples, the importance of the UNDRIP.**

21a. INVITES the Commission to annually report to the Council on the implementation of the new EU Strategy for 2030 and on the recommendations included in these Conclusions, and to present, in 2025, the findings of the review on the progress made and to involve the Council if further action is needed.

**Roadmap for planting 3 billion additional trees**

22. ~~WELCOMES the Roadmap for planting 3 billion additional trees in the EU by 2030 based on the overall principle of planting and growing the right tree in the right place and for the right purpose.~~

22a. **Acknowledges the Roadmap for planting 3 billion additional trees in the EU by 2030** **and** STRESSES that the conditions set for such additional **tree** planting are voluntary **and that there are** ~~and RECOGNISES the~~significant challenges of land availability in Member States, and that Member States’ legal procedures for approving afforestation measures are applicable. ~~and~~ In this regard WELCOMES the monitoring component of the roadmap, which should include availability of certified forest reproductive material.

1. Doc. 12695/1/20 REV 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Doc. 8609/19 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Doc. 15151/19 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Doc. 9694/21 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Doc 14594/19 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Doc. 12210/20 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **The Eighth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference, 14-15 April 2021** [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170701164258/http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-3annex3.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **Document 12695/1/19 REV 1 – paragraph 6(g)** [↑](#footnote-ref-9)