*PRESS RELEASE the 17th of April 2009*

**EUSTAFOR's General Assembly, 16th of April in Brussels**

The European State Forest Association held its General Assembly on Thursday, 16th of April in the European Forestry House in Brussels. The Assembly, chaired by Mr Pierre-Olivier DREGE, adopted its policy priorities and the working plan for 2009.

After discussions and presentations, which included Ms Emese Kottász, from the European Commission DG Transport and Energy, who spoke about the state of play concerning the Renewable Energy Eirective, three subjects were identified as the main priorities for EUSTAFOR in 2009: 1) implementation of renewable energy strategy and associated wood mobilization, 2) developing ecosystem services and 3) the role of European forests in international climate change policy.

EUSTAFOR's members agreed to work together especially concerning the renewable energy national action plans, which the Member States' governments have to submit to the European Commission by June 2010. EUSTAFOR's members also reconfirmed their commitment to contribute to climate change mitigation and to co-operate in meeting the challenges of adaptating Europe's forests to a changing climate..

EUSTAFOR's first executive director Mr Erik KOSENKRANIUS who is returning to Estonia was warmly thanked for his service and the new executive director Mr Martin LINDELL from Sweden was welcomed to take over the lead of the Association from the 1st of May 2009.

EUSTAFOR was established in 2006 and currently has 28 members from 21 European countries. EUSTAFOR's task is to analyze and investigate the existing framework conditions within the EU, in order to create the preconditions for sustainable management of state forests in Europe.

The goal of EUSTAFOR is to promote the common interest of state forests in Europe in the scope of their sustainable development. The Association supports and strengthens state forest organizations in Europe to maintain and enhance an economically viable, socially beneficial, culturally valuable and ecologically responsible sustainable forest management.

EUSTAFOR's members are together managing ~46 million ha of forest, The annual increment totals ~155 million $m^3$ and the annual harvest was 111 million $m^3$ in 2008. EUSTAFOR's members have ~111 300 employees.

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