

**7th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference
20 October 2015, Madrid, Spain**

EUSTAFOR Statement at Roundtable 4

*Mr. Per-Olof Wedin,
President of EUSTAFOR*

Distinguished Chairperson, Ministers, Excellences, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR), it is an honor to speak at this Roundtable of the 7th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference.

This Ministerial Conference comes at a good time to start a debate about the future of European forests vis-à-vis currently emerging challenges and opportunities. The latter are caused by climate change and the need for adaptation of forest ecosystems to changing climatic conditions, deregulated ground water balance, increased occurrence of pest and disease outbreaks as well as due to forest fires and calamities caused by other abiotic agents. Ongoing globalization means forestry is increasingly influenced by coexisting policies and economic sectors. Today's challenges and opportunities are therefore more complex and demanding than ever.

Distinguished Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Forests are currently being confronted with the urgent need to respond to increasing demands for bioenergy. Renewable raw materials are needed to substitute for fossil materials and thereby mitigate climate change. EUSTAFOR's 29 state forest management organizations sustainably manage one third of the European Union's forest area. The combined annual harvest exceeds 120 million cubic meters of round timber. Due to the significant potential of the resources they manage, European state forests are well positioned to enable the transition towards a more competitive and resource-efficient bio-based economy.

Sustainably managed and multi-functional forests are a home for biodiversity and make significant contributions to the protection of sites and species embedded in the NATURA 2000 network throughout the European Union. They provide ecosystem services, such as recreation and human well-being, education, protective functions of forests with regards to water sources, climate, infrastructure and livelihoods, for the benefit of society as a whole. European state forests are also significant promoters of innovation and research, both at European and national levels.

This being said, it is crucial not to neglect the economic viability of forest management because forests and forestry are subject to open market rules and need to be economically viable. Together, EUSTAFOR's member organizations provide employment to more than 100 thousand Europeans, particularly in rural areas. Indirectly they create even more employment in downstream forest-related industries.

State forests organizations have a long tradition of sustainable forest management that is well grounded in national legislation and strict governance systems as well as by long-term forest management planning. We would like to emphasize that achieving an equilibrium between the different demands put on forestry can only be accomplished through a stable policy framework that tackles forests and their management in a holistic way.

Distinguished Chairperson, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Considering the increasing importance of the European forest sector and the need for forests and forestry to meet the demands of such a diversity of policy sectors, it is of utmost importance to strengthen the policy framework for forests at pan-European level. Forest Europe is well positioned to do so through their platform which makes possible a transparent and inclusive dialogue between European countries and the Commission and forest-based stakeholders and international organizations.

We would like to confirm that, at both an operational and large scale level, European state forest organizations not only have the ability but also have the ambition to be a powerful tool for the implementation of the decisions of this Ministerial Conference.

Thank you for your attention.