



To the members of the Environmental Committee
of the European Parliament

Brussels 13th March 2009

European forest owners' response to the draft motion for resolution on deforestation and forest degradation

The above mentioned organisations, representing European forest owners, wish to draw your attention to some elements in the motion for a resolution on addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest degradation to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

We find it worrisome that information concerning deforestation in Europe is not based on commonly approved facts. We would like to highlight that according to MCPFE (The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe) and UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) statistics presented in the report "State of Europe's Forests 2007" there is no real threat of deforestation in Europe. During the period 1990-2000 the area of forest in MCPFE countries increased by 10 million hectares. Respectively, the increase during 2000-2005 was 3.6 million hectares.

From 1990 to 2005, the forest area decreased in 7 MCPFE countries, including Russia. However, the decrease in percentage is modest and is well within the error of the difference between inventories conducted during this period. In the few countries where "deforestation" exists it is due to the normal land use change. For example in Finland, the forest coverage is nearly 75 % of the land area. Therefore it is not possible to build new infrastructure, houses etc. without diminishing the forest area.

The following figures are taken from the above-mentioned report:

Between 1990 and 2005 deforestation has happened in following countries:

- Albania (-0,25%)
- Belgium (-0,15%)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (-0,11%)
- Finland (-0,31%)
- Romania (-0,01%)
- Russia (-0,01%)
- Serbia (-0,43%)

Between 2000 and 2005 deforestation has happened in following countries:

- Finland (-0,31%)
- Russia (-0,01%)
- Serbia (-0,10)

We would kindly ask you to explore this excellent report for more information on European forest resources. The report can be found under the following link:

http://www.mcpfe.org/files/u1/publications/pdf/state_of_europes_forests_2007.pdf

We would also like to point out the following critical issues concerning the amendments proposed to the draft resolution:

Amendment 6

There is no threat of deforestation in Europe however; the European forests are affected by the climate change. We would like to propose the following formulation:

“Whereas deforestation occurs at an alarming rate of 13 million hectares per year, most of it happening in tropical forests, but also affecting forests Europe through climate change, leading to a decline in the health of its forest resources”

Amendment 7

As shown by the above-mentioned figure there is no real trend of deforestation in any parts of Europe. Therefore the formulation in amendment 7 regarding the state of Western European forests is not based on facts.

Amendment 15

According to MCPFE statistics there is no signs of deforestation in Europe. On the contrary, the growing stock as well as carbon stock is increasing steadily also in Eastern European forests. High value forest land is protected in EU through NATURA 2000 regulation and national forest laws. These secure that degradation is not a problem. Moreover, some Eastern European countries have protected remarkably higher part of their territories according to bird and habitat directive. For example Bulgaria is protecting 26,5% its terrestrial area according to habitat directive, at same time the EU average is 13,2%.

Amendment 17

The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing Countries is a collaboration between FAO, UNDP and UNEP. The UN-REDD Programme is aimed at tipping the economic balance in favor of sustainable management of forests so that their formidable economic, environmental and social goods and services benefit countries, communities and forest users while also contributing to important reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the programme is not to preserve the forest resources of developing countries for unlimited periods, but to contribute to the sustainable management of these resources, and to give incentives to halt the deforestation.

In addition, the evaluation of areas for protection should be based on scientifically accepted and measurable criteria and should concentrate on areas with high biodiversity values. The term “old growth forest” does not have a commonly approved definition. As a multiple variable term it may refer to stand age, origin of species or growth dynamics as the only criteria for protection. Therefore the terms use in official EU documents should be avoided.

Amendment 20

In 2007 the Advisory Group on Forest and Cork, representing all key stakeholders in EU forestry sector, unanimously adopted the resolution on forest fires. This resolution asked for the re-establishment of independent financing for forest fire prevention to protect the environment and the reform of the European Union Solidarity Fund in order to allow for direct compensation to victims of natural disasters. The main concern of forestry sector is not standards for supervision and protection of forest areas, but political and financial support for forest fire prevention and fire control.

In this light we would like to propose following formulation:

“6a. The growing threat posed by fires, alongside climate change and industrial emissions are the main danger to European forest, and points out that additional institutional capacity and financing for fire prevention, fire control and restoration of forest areas are needed in order to protect European forest and their mitigation capacity”

The European forest owners find it important that the facts presented in official EU documents are correct. We trust your help in this important matter. We would be happy to further discuss these matters with you and to provide our expertise on any further developments.

Yours sincerely,

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