



Bratislava, 19 September 2018

Joint Statement on the occasion of the FOREST EUROPE Roundtable Meeting on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe, 19-20 September 2018 in Bratislava, Slovak Rep.

Many recent global and European policy developments give an increasingly important role to forests and the forest-based sector. Forests, sustainable forest management and the forest-based sector contribute significantly towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Thus it is crucial to have a clear and holistic framework to European forests and the forest-based sector at pan-European level.

Constructively advancing with a discussions towards a Legally-binding Agreement (LBA) would provide a strong signal to support the European forest sector in enhancing its political coherence. As a next step the implementation of sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of European forests will be strengthened.

The Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Decision has already recognized the progress in reaching an agreement on all substantial forest-related elements achieved by Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. The draft negotiating text (DNT) for a LBA is a good basis for further reflection towards a future European forest convention. The still missing elements should be completed by the negotiating parties in thoroughly established process and within a foreseeable deadline. Namely, the DNT should be updated to reflect recent forests-related policy developments, such as the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Moreover, we support a clear reference to the bio-economy as a key element to boost jobs and growth, in particular, in rural areas, and contribute to tackle climate change.

As representatives of forest owners and managers, we therefore call for a firm commitment and engagement from all signatories to remain fully dedicated to further develop a LBA and its implementation at pan-European level.