



Madrid, 21 October 2015

## Joint Statement

### 7th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

#### Roundtable 5: 25 Years of FOREST EUROPE

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

The major group of public and private forest owners and managers as well as other land owners, represented by the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperatives (COPA-COGECA), European Landowners' Organization (ELO), European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR), European Federation of Municipal Forest Owners (FECOF), and Union of Foresters of Southern Europe (USSE), welcome the Madrid Ministerial Declaration which summarizes and reflects on 25 years of promoting sustainable forest management by the FOREST EUROPE process.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of FOREST EUROPE in Madrid provides us with an extraordinary occasion to recapitulate the major achievements of our 25 years of cooperation on forests in the pan-European region.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1990 in Strasbourg, the ministers responsible for forests gathered for the first time to share their concerns about the health of European forests and to seek for solutions and a European approach to improve it. Since then FOREST EUROPE has been well established and developed as an efficient platform for European countries and stakeholders to debate on emerging forest policy issues.

Twenty-five years of FOREST EUROPE provide good evidence that this process has been useful. Today in Europe we have well-functioning forest monitoring systems and research programs, gene banks and advanced forest fire prevention systems. FOREST EUROPE succeeded in developing a genuine European contribution to the global forest agenda agreed at the UNCED Rio Summit in 1992.

Distinguished Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

As early as 1993, sustainable forest management (SFM) was defined as a political concept and its main principles were developed. It is widely implemented and remains valid today. Since then, SFM has been broadly incorporated in the national forest legislations and policies of all European countries, making them pioneers in implementing SFM on the ground. The

subsequent Ministerial Conferences undertook further endeavors that gave birth to the pan-European criteria and indicators for SFM and the pan-European operational level guidelines (PEOLG) as well as national forest programs. These are the practical policy tools for implementing SFM on the ground.

Over the years, the FOREST EUROPE declarations and resolutions addressed emerging challenges and societal demands such as forestry in cross-sectoral cooperation and the economic viability of SFM, the protection of forest biodiversity, soils, and water sources as well as the use of forest biomass for bioenergy and other purposes. Last but not least, this process also succeeded in opening a completely new chapter on a legally binding framework for Europe's forests.

However, further efforts are required in addition to these achievements in order to make the process and its outcomes more meaningful and translate them into concrete actions at national and European levels.

The biggest merit of the FOREST EUROPE process is its transparent and constructive participatory dialogue, which currently involves 46 European governments and the European Commission as well as numerous forest sector stakeholders and other international organizations. European forest owners and managers have always supported the process and have contributed with their highly valuable practical experience and knowledge, which come from the practical implementation of SFM. An open and transparent dialogue is the essential guiding principle of this process, ensuring that those who own and actually take care of the forest in Europe remain well involved in all future debates and decisions.

Today's challenges regarding forests and the forest-based sector are more complex and demanding than ever. We therefore agree that this process needs to be adapted in order to be able to respond to current and emerging challenges and opportunities. We believe that making this crucial decision now to strengthen the FOREST EUROPE process will ensure and further develop the sustainable management of European forests and their multi-purpose use for the benefit of everyone.

Distinguished Chairperson, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

To recapitulate, the European public and private forest owners and managers as well as other land owners fully support the ongoing initiative towards further strengthening the current FOREST EUROPE process with a view to achieve its increased effectiveness and recognition at pan-European and global levels. European forest owners and managers are ready to contribute and take further responsibility towards the next stage of this important process.

Thank you for your attention.

Per-Olof Wedin  
President of EUSTAFOR