



January 24, 2013

To: the members of the INC-3 negotiating committee

NGO's concerns in regards to the legally binding agreement on forests in Europe

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Before the INC-3 negotiations start, we would like to reiterate some key concerns that Europe's NGO have in regards to the legally binding agreement on forests in Europe (LBA), which is currently under negotiations.

We acknowledge the fact that coordination and coherence in forests and forestry are not efficient enough, but we also believe that the legally binding agreement on forests in Europe **should be clearly based on multi-functionality and on a balanced reflection of the seven principles of sustainable forest management**. The LBA should be built on the MCPFE's own decisions, as well as other relevant international commitments. It should set clear targets and be linked to strong and measurable indicators.

Unfortunately, the key question submitted by the NGOs (open NGOs' letter, 09/2010) and other relevant stakeholders regarding the added value of the LBA for the protection of forests in Europe still remains open. Even worse, the negotiations so far (INC-2) give us the impression that this will likely remain so and that the resulting final agreement will be at best vague and without a practical content, and at worst a tool for wood products marketing and a boost for large-scale owner's and exploiter's rights. While the abovementioned have voiced their concerns unabashedly, the connection of the LBA to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the Convention for Biological Diversity was not greeted with enthusiasm by the parties and still remains vague. The LBA so far is also not in line with the EU 2020 Biodiversity

Strategy, which, among other measures, asks for all forests to have biodiversity-related management plans.

NGOs believe that the LBA should take into account the Helsinki resolutions¹, the Vienna Improved indicators² and the quoted agreed biodiversity strategies. It should:

1. Address **balanced** future challenges of all ecosystem services and not be dominated by wood production.
2. Determine well- defined and measurable **targets** and a **monitoring scheme** for following the agreement's implementation.
3. Include the following specific **conservation targets**:
 - a. Halt the deterioration in the status of all forest species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and national red lists, and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status.
 - b. Prevent the spread of invasive alien species in Europe.
 - c. Maintain and enhance forest ecosystems and their services by establishing green infrastructures and restoring at least 15% of Europe's degraded ecosystems comparing to 2012's situation, in accordance with commitments under the CBD's Aichi targets.
 - d. Reduce the direct pressures on forest biodiversity by increasing the area of strictly protected forests to at least 10% of total European forests.
 - e. Prevent any land use change for forests unless they enhance the conservation status for species and habitats.
 - f. Improve pan-European forest management practices and standards for a better support of forest ecosystems services (including biodiversity) by introducing a better framework for Sustainable Forest Management.
4. Set **sustainability criteria** for production and consumption of forest biomass so it delivers the expected climate benefits but not at the expense of forest ecosystem services.

In our understanding, the draft texts being negotiated present the following shortcomings:

- ✓ The concept of Sustainable Forest Management remains broad and can be easily misunderstood or badly implemented
- ✓ The concepts of "*resource efficiency*" (or "*forest limitations*") and "*reduced consumption*" are clearly lacking from the text.
- ✓ Although stated as a priority, the word "*biodiversity*" is missing from relevant parts of the text, while the word "*goods*" is often replacing the word "*biodiversity*".
- ✓ There are no indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the agreement, so there would be no safe way to check whether the agreement achieves true and practical impact on Europe's forests.
- ✓ There is, as of yet, no obligation to establish management plans with biodiversity targets
- ✓ The text still lacks any compliance mechanism that goes beyond mere reporting.

¹http://www.foresteurope.org/docs/MC/MC_helsinki_resolutionH1.pdf,

http://www.foresteurope.org/docs/MC/MC_helsinki_resolutionH2.pdf

²http://www.foresteurope.org/docs/reporting/Vienna_Improved_Indicators.pdf

These elements absolutely need to be included in the text at the INC-3 meeting. It will not be possible for European NGOs to support the text as it is developed at the moment, unless it is significantly amended to ensure real sustainability and compliance with decisions of the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE- FOREST EUROPE). We urge you to engage to this direction in Antalya as well as to endeavour to integrate the above-mentioned biodiversity-related items into the LBA, taking responsibility for the society, environment and future generations.

We remain at your disposal for any clarifications.

Best regards,

(signed)



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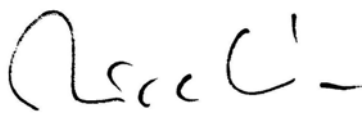
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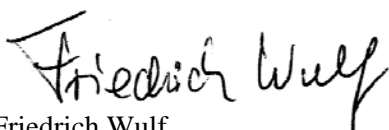
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