



Bonn, 30 September 2024

European forest and forest-based sector joint statement for the 9th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

As representatives of the European forest and forest-based sector, the undersigned organisations would like to share their views ahead the 9th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Bonn Conference).

Forests are a key ecosystem of Europe and the world, providing indispensable ecological, economic, and social benefits. They play a crucial role in maintaining biodiversity, regulating water cycle and climate, providing sustainably sourced raw materials to support self-sufficiency of Europe, and supporting the livelihoods of millions of people. In a context of ever-growing pressures, the FOREST EUROPE process has been fostering over three decades a structured and inclusive collaboration within Europe in order to develop relevant strategies for the forest sector.

The European forest and forest-based sector promotes sustainable and multifunctional management of Europe's forests, both in policymaking and on the ground. Therefore, on the occasion of the Bonn Conference, we wish to express our strong support for FOREST EUROPE, as a governments-led policy process. It is a key opportunity to reiterate the importance and the achievements of this process and the value of its regional focus.

Through the adoption of the *Bonn Ministerial Declaration* and the *Bonn Ministerial Decision*, European ministers responsible for forests will give strong messages to further support the European concept of sustainable forest management and promote a more resilient and viable forests and the forest sector. Both documents present a shared vision and commitment of our continent.

The *Bonn Ministerial Declaration* re-affirms the dynamic concept of sustainable forest management as the cornerstone of all efforts by the forest and forest-based sector's communities. The declaration's emphasis on the importance of a sustainable and circular bioeconomy and the efficient use of resources, contributing to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, is a shared aspiration of European governments and stakeholders. Additionally, ensuring that our sector's workforce is

equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, this will further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of forest management practices on the continent.

The commitment to supporting Ukraine in rebuilding its forest sector amidst ongoing conflict exemplifies the solidarity and international cooperation that are hallmarks of the Forest Europe process. This initiative not only aids a nation in need but also strengthens the entire European forest network, showcasing the power of unity and support.

The *Bonn Ministerial Decision* focuses on the necessity of enhancing forest resilience and reinforcing international and transboundary cooperation. Given the increasing frequency of extreme climatic events and their consequences, forest health and resilience are rightly put forth as priority action for both policymaking and action on the ground. Resilience through active sustainable forest management also ensures that the forest-based industries and the rural communities they employ can continue to thrive economically and socially, thereby remaining key actors in an ever-growing circular bioeconomy. The promotion of Green Forest Jobs and education is a significant part of these efforts. Investing in the upskilling and training of workforce ensures that our sector is well prepared to meet the future challenges.

We, therefore, welcome the establishment of the Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK), which will foster transboundary collaboration, knowledge exchange and capacity building.

In conclusion, as European stakeholders, we would like to reiterate that we remain fully committed to continue supporting the work of FOREST EUROPE and the implementation of the Ministerial Decision and Declaration. We are advocating for policies and practices that would enable effective implementation on the ground.

We urge all FOREST EUROPE Signatories and Observers to seize this opportunity to reaffirm their commitments, enhance cooperation, and developing authentic actions to safeguard European forests. Together, we can ensure that Europe's forests and active use and management of forests continue to thrive, providing invaluable benefits for generations to come.

Signatories

CEI-Bois – European Confederation of the Woodworking Industries

CEPF – Confederation of European Forest Owners

Cepi – Confederation of European Paper Industries

CETTAR - European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors

Copa-Cogeca – European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives

ELO – European Landowners' Organization

EOS – European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry

EUSTAFOR – European State Forest Association

FECOF – European Federation of Municipality Forests

UEF – Union of European Foresters

USSE – Union of Foresters of Southern Europe