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A POLICY FRAME FOR THE EUROPEAN FORESTRY MODEL

CEPF/COPA-COGECA/ELO/USSE JOINT POSITION PAPER

With regard to the implementation report on a Forestry Strategy for the European Union and the relevance of European forestry for sustainable development of Society

Taking into account current discussions *inter alia* on Rural Development policies, the EU Climate Change Programme, the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Water Framework Directive, the 6th Environmental Action Programme and its various thematic strategies.

CEPF/COPA-COGECA/ELO/USSE stress the following points:

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF FORESTRY IN EUROPE

The forest surface¹ in EU² 15 [25] amounts to 137 [162] Mio ha representing some 42% [40%] of the land area. The development of forest area in Europe is positive, increasing annually by about 0,1%, also due to the responsibility of close to 15 million family forest owners who manage 60% of the forest area in Europe.

Across EU 15 the share of family forest ownership varies from 15% in Greece up to 80% in Austria. In each European region we find different history, different traditions and different values related to family forest ownership.

“The EU’s forestry strategy should take account of the fact that most of Europe’s forests are the property of millions of forest owners who have to ensure a multifunctional management of forests guaranteeing the sustainability of the potential of the associated natural resources; the proprietary rights of these forest owners should be respected” [Thomas report adopted 18/12/1996 European Parliament].

2. THE EUROPEAN FORESTRY MODEL

CEPF/COPA-COGECA/ELO/USSE support the MCPFE process, a dynamic policy discussion initiated in 1990, based on respect for the multifunctional role and the diversity of European forests as overall principles for action. Thirteen years later the 4th MCPFE re-emphasised the European forestry model of sustainable forest management as an **integrated** concept balancing economic, social, ecological and cultural³ values.

Sustainable forestry is the basis for the sustainable forestry and forest-based industry in Europe. An industry sector that generates 400 billion Euro turnover, provides 3,5 million jobs and contributes 9% to the added value of the manufacturing sector.

The role of the forestry and forest-based industry sector for the sustainable development of society, for human welfare and social cohesion is underestimated and has to be reconsidered.

An European policy frame for forestry needs to be based on a genuine respect for national forest policies and thus concentrate Community action on adding value to national policies.

There is the need for a clear common standpoint in the global forestry processes based on an effective promotion of the European Forestry Model.

¹ Forest and other wooded land. State of Europe’s forests 2003. UNECE/MCPFE. ISBN 3–902073-09-8

² European Union

³ According to the Vienna Resolution 3



3. POWER – COORDINATION, CONSULTATION, PARTICIPATION AND A LEGAL ANCHOR AS BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- *Coordination*

Since the coming into force of a forestry strategy for the EU in 1998 coordination of forest and forestry related issues within the EC⁴ has been a major concern. The implementation of the strategy has failed due to lack of focused actions, required resources and policy coherence.

The lack of coordination has resulted in numerous binding measures or policies that impact on forests, whilst having no consistent approach to forestry and the forest industry sector. This is reflected in the number of Directorates General in the EC (more than 8) involved in forest-related issues.

- *Consultation*

The current “integration” of existing consultation mechanisms, the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) and the Advisory Committee on Forestry and Cork (AC), in the policy-formulation is unsatisfactory. The expertise and knowledge assembled in the SFC and AC are to be taken serious as an **ex-ante** policy advisory source and not as an ex-post information deposit. The SFC and AC need proactively to co-ordinate their actions to avoid duplication and thus contribute to consistent policy formulation.

- *Participation*

Participation of civil society representatives in Community policy formulation is gaining importance. However with respect to forest policy formulation it has to be acknowledged that family forest owners are a key stakeholder group.

It is noted with growing alarm that there is disproportional emphasis placed on the social and ecological responsibility of forest owners over the responsibility of society to respect property rights of private owners, and their ability to contribute to sustainable income and job opportunities. It is the private forest owner who finally bears the costs and benefits of management decisions with their economic, social, ecological and cultural dimension.

- *A legal anchor*

In order to deal with the European forestry and the forest-based sector in a holistic way it is needed to have a mandate and legal basis included in the Treaties of the European Union. This would give adequate recognition to the multiple functions of forests, the contribution of European forestry and forest-based industries to human welfare and the management of rural areas.

However to optimise subsidiarity and thus guarantee the diversity of forestry in Europe, the scope of EU competence shall be limited to supporting, coordinating and complementary actions as provided under article I – 16 of the Draft Constitutional Treaty. The power to adopt legislative rules shall remain in the hands of the Member States⁵.

4. PRODUCTION – WOOD, NON-WOOD AND WOOD-BASED PRODUCTS: WE CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT THEM

- *Priority to the use of renewable resources*

The main asset of sustainable forest management is the production of a variety of wood and non-wood products [e.g. cork] as the most promising and multifunctional natural resource of the 21st century. There is no equivalent material to wood. Wood protects the forest, it is a clean product for society and the Planet, in compliance with environmental policies. The EU should actively promote the use of wood and wood-based products in the Member States.

⁴ European Commission

⁵ Article I-16 para 3 “Legally binding acts adopted by the Union on the basis of the provisions specific to these areas in Part three cannot entail harmonisation of Member States’ laws or regulations”. The bulk of the power to adopt legislative rules remains in the hands of the Member States and intervention by the Community cannot have the effect of excluding intervention by them.



New technologies increase the efficiency of all grades and sizes of wood and non-wood products, creating added value throughout the processing chain, they are regarded as high tech materials with almost no technical barriers to their application.

- *Certification*

Certification can only be a voluntary market tool to improve communication and awareness building related to sustainable forest management.

In that respect the PEFC⁶ system has proven to be best suited for the specificities of European forestry and serve as a model in other regions.

The PEFC is based on the political commitments and both the criteria and the indicators of the MCPFE.

- *Biomass, energy, vitality*

Demand continues to increase for the use of forest biomass for energy⁷. European and national targets to fulfil the commitments under the Kyoto Protocol highlight the potential of wood as alternative energy source. The allocation of wood needs to be based on flexibility and optimisation of resource use on local and regional level.

Currently the net annual increment in European forests surmounts the net annual felling rate by approx. 35%. Increased thinning activities will synergistically lead to improved stability and vitality of forest stands.

5. PROTECTION – TO PROTECT THE FOREST IS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

It is a strategical point to ensure the sustainable management of forests. The main risks, on a long term basis, for the protection of forests are:

- Forest fires
- Atmospheric pollution
- Climate change
- Pest and diseases

An European policy can truly be of added value to national policies addressing the trans-boundary importance of forest fires, air pollution, climate change, pest and diseases.

Forest fires

An adequate prevention policy based on the subsidiarity principle must be designed taking into consideration regional specificities and in close partnership with forest owners.

The proven advantages of regulation 2158/92 have to be safeguarded regarding their efficiency and effectiveness. Forest fires are a too serious problem *sui generis* of European importance to risk the abolition of a functioning and well-established system.

Atmospheric pollution

Ever since the mid 80s European forests are severely suffering from trans-boundary atmospheric pollution.

Although the European and national commitments to fulfil the Kyoto targets could bring a positive dynamic to the reduction of greenhouse gases, recent actions in that field did not as yet lead to improved health and vitality of European forests.

Climate Change

Climate change might further lead to changing growing conditions. At present it is not known if these changes will proceed slowly or rapidly. The change in average temperature that has already occurred will lead to effects such as increased damage by insects and diseases. The complexity of trans-boundary air pollution, its interrelationship with climate change, and their effects on forests require much more basic research to avoid false assumptions leading to unsound policy decisions.

Pest and diseases

The recognition of the global dimension of the spreading of forest menacing pest and diseases and its adequate treatment needs to be a priority.

⁶ Pan European Forest Certification

⁷ Including traditional uses of wood for heating and cooking.



As a consequence it is necessary to integrate forest protection in a Prevention and Cohesion Plan on Natural Catastrophes. An autonomous financing is required to cover risks and secure investment in sustainable forest management.

6. PEOPLE – FOREST OWNERS, THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND SUSTAINABLE RURAL MANAGEMENT

Besides timber production, sustainable forest management includes environmental and landscape services which are not marketable but from which the whole society benefits, mainly water-, wildlife-, soil- and landscape management. For generations, family forest owners have managed and maintained the forest and hence shaped and developed the landscape. To maintain and enhance the economic viability for family forest owners', further efforts are needed to develop the full market potential and value of marketable and non-marketable goods and services.

Due to the accession of new Member States it is important to give attention to the requirements and support of private forestry – in particular the development of small scale forestry. Assistance and support to the establishment and development of forest owners' associations should be made available. Forest sector organisations and structures should support the implementation of sustainable forest management in private forests.

An adequate valuation of externalities is needed to serve as a basis for mechanisms to compensate forest owners for the cost of providing non-marketable benefits to society.

Forests and forestry are creating and ensuring employment in rural areas and contribute considerably to indirect economic viability of rural economies through maintaining the infrastructure and preventing depopulation. The forest sector is dependent on the workforce living in rural areas: without viable and well-functioning rural areas the lack of workforce would be a threat to sustainable forest management and the availability of the raw material for the wood-processing industries.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/REQUIRED ACTIONS

The undersigning organisations urge the responsible Ministers within the frame of the upcoming inter-governmental conference:

To include forests and forestry as legal mandate under Article I-16 of the Draft Constitutional Treaty on "Areas for supporting, coordinating or complementary action"⁸.




The undersigning organisations request from the EC to take up the following issues in the implementation report on a Forestry Strategy for the EU:

- To emphasis the role of European forestry as an economic sector and as a driving force behind sustainable development in rural and semi-urban areas.
- To point out the need for a clear common standpoint in the global forestry processes based on an effective promotion of the European Forestry Model.
- To safeguard the proven advantages of regulation 2158/92 regarding their efficiency and effectiveness.

⁸ Article I-16 para 3 "Legally binding acts adopted by the Union on the basis of the provisions specific to these areas in Part three cannot entail harmonisation of Member States' laws or regulations". The bulk of the power to adopt legislative rules remains in the hands of the Member States and intervention by the Community cannot have the effect of excluding intervention by them.



- To support an EU wide promotion campaign on the enhanced use of wood through the removal of barriers [e.g. CEN codes] for the use of wood in the construction, furnishing, decoration and energy sector.
- To ensure a balanced representation of private and public forestry interests in the SFC decision-making process.
- To facilitate an effective cooperation between the SFC and the AC on Forestry and cork, including the exchange of relevant documentation. In addition the Chairmen of the SFC and the AC will be entitled to attend each other's Committees on a regular basis.
- To establish a focal point for the coordination of forestry and forest related issues within DG Agriculture.
- To support balanced research on the complexity of forests and their sustainable management

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