



European forest owners and industries see benefits in the Forest Europe initiative on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.

European forest owners and industries see the Forest Europe initiative for creating a legally binding agreement (LBA) as an opportunity to strengthen the Pan-European cooperation on the protection of forests and to strengthen the implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM).

Growing awareness of both the protection and sustainable use of forests has been evident in the last years. The international forest debate has intensified. A number of political processes and instruments deal with forests from various perspectives, for example the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This growing attention and the numerous activities need enhancing the collaboration and coordination between processes and instruments at all levels.

We believe that a potential LBA, as discussed by the Forest Europe signatories, focusing on sustainable forest management is a particularly suitable instrument for enhanced cooperation and collaboration. It will provide opportunities for integration of measures addressing concerns on forest biodiversity, the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change as well as maintaining livelihoods in Europe and beyond.

The basis of Forest Europe is sound and very well acknowledged among the signatory countries, the scientific community, international processes such as CBD as well as among a broad range of stakeholders. European forest owner and industry organisations not only fully support the ongoing initiative on LBA but also wish for Forest Europe to remain as a leading pan-European forest policy process. By upgrading Forest Europe achievements to a legally binding instrument the whole forest sector would benefit from:

- a strengthened compliance of the commitments by the signatories,
- the reinforcement of implementation of SFM, safeguarding and ensuring the continuation of the multiple and important forest functions,
- stronger balancing of the objectives that society has in relation to the multiple use of forests and the continuous development of SFM to address biodiversity and climate change in particular,
- better, more accurate and more coordinated information concerning the forests of Europe,
- support and guidance on how to create synergies between the implementation of national forest-related actions and programmes.
- stronger political recognition of the forest sector which is essential to further streamline concepts for forest protection and their sustainable management in Europe and the worldwide.

We strongly support the Forest Europe development of an LBA. We believe that in the global efforts against the climate change with rising demands, the forest resources require better protection.

We call for NGOs' active contribution in developing improved forest governance through Forest Europe, a transparent and extensive platform. We need to find joint solutions to elemental questions in the face of the present environmental and economic crisis. We have to answer society's demands on the provision of all forest functions and to sustain nature's capacity to deliver goods and services, which all humans depend on. We have to look realistically at the current pressures and possible solutions to share this responsibility.



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