



## **Forest Europe, 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference Bratislava, 14-15 April 2021**

### Individual statement of the Union of European Foresters for Roundtable 2 : Sustainable forest management–our joint answer to the vision of sustainable development

The Union of European Foresters (UEF) was created in 1965 and is the oldest and largest organization of professional foresters in Europe, joining together 25 groups of forestry associations from 21 countries (Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldavia, Poland, Spain, Sweden Switzerland and Turkey). The UEF represents ca 85.000 foresters of all ranks working for different kind of forest owners (state, community, private). The individual statement of the UEF is presented as followed:

The ongoing climate change reinforced by the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic is bringing the world in a dramatic way more and more out of balance. The European Professional Forest managers and Forest owners are **highly concerned about the future of European Forests and the living conditions of future generations** in Europe and worldwide.

European foresters have a firm understanding of their responsibilities for sustainable forest management and sustainable development. This relates to the protection of nature and environment, considered in their forest operations, including the protection of water quality as well as their awareness of the importance of the use of renewable resources from forests.

Future of the European forests should be seen through the multifunctional roles that forests are playing in the life of societies. Forests must be seen in the context of complex societal challenges such as climate change, population growth and increasing resource shortages caused by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, especially those that are high carbon emitting. Such recognition requires, among others, improved communication about benefits of forests in a green economy through a comprehensive, European-wide, inclusive communication strategy that joins the commitment and support of all stakeholders.

Forest management is multipurpose and is based on combination of functions that include wood production, wildlife protection, recreational, scientific, educational and social. To tackle the climate change foresters invest in water retention and in active protection measures to strengthen the forest stand to withstand the effects of the climate change (pest gradations, drought, wind throws). Taking the forests under strict protection won't slow down the negative climate changes, but it will probably accelerate the problem. Forest should be treated as buffering systems of the climate change. Only multipurpose, sustainable development with maximized afforestation of non-forest areas (highest CO<sub>2</sub> absorption) and programs for promoting the above-mentioned practices for private owners may bring higher benefits.

Multifunctional and Sustainable Forest Management is the right tool to ensure these key actions in a consistent way in the various European forest ecosystems and should be the base of coherent strategies.

This includes fighting climate change as the main reason for the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services by timber production. Every green economy needs the sustainable raw wood material, which is natural and renewable.

Beside the active participation of Forestry in a green economy in the context of an ongoing climate change SFM also ensures biodiversity and ecosystem services by close to nature forestry and can develop the forest ecosystems in a climate stable way. In addition to the existing number of completely restricted forests, the different functions of forests should be ensured in a combined way in the same stands without segregation of functions in different stand. In the past, forests were managed in a sustainable way. The biodiversity in forests,

which must be kept now, was included in the forest management process and ecosystem services for the society were offered for free by the forest owners.

No value or price of these services have been derived, even if there is a conscience that there is a high value of fresh air, binded CO<sub>2</sub>, recreation and tourism in forests and biodiversity.

Forests are currently dying, forest ecosystems are changing rapidly, invasive species are spreading and the economic base of Sustainable Forest Management and the delivering of Ecosystem Services is changing in a fundamental way.

Society is demanding services without giving them a value in the market system, because there is a problem in the different sectors how to do the monetization. A very wide range, of ecosystem services has to be offered by the forest owners for free and only some very special projects can be financed by the public.

Education and communication of the goals of the sustainable management, water protection and increased wood accumulation are prerequisites to raise the qualification of foresters, workers, contractors and stakeholders, and to affirm their commitment to contribute to these goals. We are pleased to acknowledge that many commitments of the resolutions aim at improving communication and raising awareness. However, it is imperative that this message reaches all actors in forest management and forest operations. Finally appropriate means need to be developed and implemented both at a political and a practical level.

In the future, basic ecosystem services should be compensated to the landowners, at least with partial flat rates. With the rapid and extreme development of climate change in the last years, this financing system of forestry will not work in the future anymore.

The loss of stock in the forests by bark beetle and dryness, the natural disasters due to climate change, the collapse of timber prices all over Europe and the additional costs for road safety measures are not compensated in an adequate way by the society, which caused the damages by the climate change. The polluter pays principle is not applied and the economic situation of many forest owners deteriorates dramatically.

The professional and experienced Forest Managers, working daily in the European Forests, look forward to strong rules, including:

- the strengthening of **Multifunctional Sustainable Forest Management** to ensure all different requested forest services to make the Green deal successful;
- a **better coherence** of all sectoral demands to Forests and Forest Management;
- the **bewaring of ecosystem services** by multifunctional Sustainable Forest Management without further segregation of different forest functions;
- a well-educated, well-equipped and safe working **Forest Workforce**;
- establishing of the urgently needed **new financing system in European Forests** as compensation for the cost-free services offered by the forest owners.