

26 August 2016



Dear Mr. Manoel Sobral Filho,

On behalf of the regional process FOREST EUROPE, we acknowledge receipt of the documents made available by the Co-Chairs of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) „options and building blocks for the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017—2030“and „the quadrennial programme of work 2017—2020“. The opportunity to comment on these documents is highly appreciated.

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (known as FOREST EUROPE) represent the pan-European voluntary political process aimed at sustainable forest management (SFM). The signatories of the process represent countries with very diverse environmental and socio-economic conditions, including developed economies and economies in transition.

The new FOREST EUROPE Work Programme for the period 2016-2020 was adopted at the Expert Level Meeting held in May 2016 in Bratislava, Slovakia. It outlines collaborative action at regional level for the further development of SFM tools; forest monitoring and reporting; enhancing the role of SFM in a green economy; incorporating values of forest ecosystem services; protection and adaptation of forests to a changing environment and climate; and enhancing the social dimension of forests for human health and well-being. They reflect the concerted efforts, expressed in Ministerial Resolutions made at the Seventh FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference in Madrid, in October 2015, to secure a sustained high-level political commitment to strengthen the means of implementation of SFM in the European region. Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB) currently serves as a secretariat of the process.

As for the proposed UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017—2030, the clear recognition of the role and contributions of relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes as partners of the International Arrangement on Forests, is timely and relevant.

Recognizing the emphasis laid therein on joint actions of Member States, international, regional and sub-regional organizations and processes, major groups and stakeholders, and noting the ongoing efforts of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its members and other relevant entities and processes, FOREST EUROPE fully supports the stated efforts to further streamline and harmonize reporting, reduce reporting burdens and synchronize data collection. Account needs to be taken of the collaborative forest resources questionnaire developed as part of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015, in order to foster synergy and coherence (ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33).

As mentioned in the section (B5) on roles and responsibilities of regional/sub-regional partners, regional processes such as FOREST EUROPE provide the nexus between global forest policies and national actions and will have an important role to play in advancing implementation of SFM as laid out in the Strategic Plan. They can also play a role in mobilizing contributions and inputs from major regional

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stakeholder groups. In the section (B5) and throughout the document, we would appreciate more emphasis given to the regional specifics, even if conditions may be as diverse as they are in Europe, and look forward to contributing to the development of specific options and actions at the forthcoming expert meeting in September 2016, in Tehran.

In line with its mission, mandate and new programme of work, FOREST EUROPE aligns itself with the inclusive and participatory approaches to implementation of ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33 and General Assembly Resolutions 62/98, 70/199, as well as the forest-related commitments of the post-2015 UN development agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Liaison Unit Bratislava on behalf of the FOREST EUROPE process looks forward to the further cooperation with the Secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests and related components within proposed programmes of work, in order to seek coherence on arising strategic issues and to continue exploring synergies on all matters relating to sustainable management of forests, including communications.

Please accept the expression of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Ludmila Marušáková
Head, FOREST EUROPE -Liaison Unit Bratislava