

Strasbourg, 17 May 2022

## **Joint Statement on adapting forests to climate change for the EU Forest Directors meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> May**

European forests and their adaptation to climate change is one of the key topics of the Forest Directors' meeting in Strasbourg, organised by the French Presidency of the Council of the EU. European forest owners would like to thank the Presidency for highlighting the biggest challenge faced by European forests.

It is worth noting that the new updated EU Adaptation Strategy, which was adopted in February 2021, acknowledges the important role of forest management and those who are responsible for it. It rightfully stated that *"promoting and sustainably managing forests will help to adapt to climate change in a cost-effective way"*.

Our future relies on sustainably managed and resilient forests – forests which are, today, suffering from the impacts of climate change. According to forecasts, the frequency and scale of natural disturbances, biotic or abiotic, will further increase. The only certainty that forest owners have today is the uncertainty regarding how their forests will be in several decades.

European forest owners are strongly committed to actively and sustainably managing our forests and safeguarding their multifunctional role. The pan-European approach, EU and national forest-related policies need to promote effective technical, scientific and policy cooperation as well as secure adequate funding for adaptation is an essential enabler for sustaining healthy and resilient European forests.

To increase the resilience of EU forests through their adaptation to climate change, actions must be tailored to local conditions and consider all available tools (e.g. biological diversity and genetic resilience, risk management and prevention, restoration of forests degraded by natural disasters). Better resilience of EU forests is achieved through a variety of possible forest management practices, reflecting the variety of EU forests, their local environment, and management choices made by European forest owners.

There is a continued need to improve our knowledge of the scope and scale of how climate change affects European forests while developing better ways of tackling, preventing and adapting forests to these changes. Accessing up-to-date scientific research, long-term datasets, best practices, operational and user-friendly tools and training opportunities will be needed to encourage forest owners to be actively involved.

To this end, we look with great interest at work currently being done by Forest Europe and EU institutions and their possible synergies. Furthermore, we are closely following the activities of Forest Europe in delivering the Pan-European Forest Risk Knowledge Mechanism. The several actions led by

the European Commission which follow are highly relevant for climate change adaptation: future development of the “Planning our Future Forests” research and innovation agenda, the announced guidance and promotion of knowledge exchange on good practices on climate adaptation and resilience (using the Climate-ADAPT platform) and the work on possible legislation on EU Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection for which the call for evidence listed forest damage as a “*priority-EU policy relevant topic*”.

Finally, European forests today have considerable climate mitigation potential which, if unlocked, would provide major climate benefits. Managing EU forests in a sustainable and active way contributes to enhanced absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and, at the same time, yields renewable and climate-friendly raw material which stores carbon and offers an alternative to fossil-based materials and fuels. Thus, without creating strong synergies between climate change mitigation and adaptation, the EU climate neutrality goal will not be reached.

Signatories:

**Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)**

**European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives (Copa-Cogeca)**