Joint Statement
FOREST EUROPE Extraordinary Ministerial Conference, Madrid 21 October 2015

The major group of private and public forest owners and managers as well as other land owners, represented by the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperatives (COPA-COGECA), European Landowners’ Organization (ELO), European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR), European Federation of Municipal Forest Owners (FECOF) and Union of Foresters of Southern Europe (USSE), welcome the FOREST EUROPE Extra-Ordinary Ministerial Conference and the Madrid Ministerial Decision to be endorsed by the Ministers as an important step forward towards strengthening the European concept of sustainable forest management.

Following complex and rather difficult negotiations, Europe’s forest owners and managers consider the Madrid Ministerial Decision a good compromise, which ensures that the work by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) is acknowledged and the draft negotiating text for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe (LBA) is recognized as a good basis for further consideration of a future European forest convention.

In particular, the clearly defined timeline and commitment to come back to this process no later than 2020 provides a promising perspective.

Considering the increasing importance of forests, but also the emerging demands from other policy sectors, a holistic policy framework and strong legal reference at pan-European level, based on key principles such as the sustainable management and multifunctionality of forests, is more than ever needed. The INC succeeded in reaching an agreement on all substantial forest-related issues, building on the pan-European definition of and criteria for sustainable forest management as well as other previous FOREST EUROPE resolutions.

The European forest owners and managers very much appreciated the transparent and constructive INC process and the opportunity to pro-actively participate and contribute to it. We do hope that the signatories remain fully dedicated to further developing and adopting an LBA in the near future.

Giving up or missing this opportunity is not an option. Constructively moving forward towards a future LBA would provide a strong political signal. Having an LBA in the near future would greatly support the European forest sector in enhancing its political integrity and consistency.

We therefore call for a firm commitment and engagement from all responsible ministers and governments to provide their strong leadership and guidance towards a future forest convention at pan-European level.

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