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**Committee of experts for the development  
of the Pan-European Ecological Network**

**(STRA-REP)**

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**5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium  
of the Pan-European Ecological Network**

**“Pan-European Ecological Network in forests:  
Conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management”**

***Krakow, 7-9 October 2004***

*Organised in co-operation with the Ministry of the Environment of Poland*

**Final Declaration**

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## **Introduction**

The sustainable management of forests and protection of their biological diversity are two highly important issues, at both world and European levels. A number of major events and processes in recent times have underlined the priority nature of this sphere of action and confirmed the importance of applying the sustainable forest management (SFM) concept and of taking an ecosystem-based approach.

### At international level

a. Forestry issues are essentially treated within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the process of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). SFM is an important concept for the Forum, while the CBD promotes an ecosystem-based approach. Convergence between these two principles was discussed at the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the CBD, held in The Hague in April 2002, and at the third meeting of the UNFF in May 2003. In an effort to clarify the relationship between sustainable forest management and ecosystem approach concepts, document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/8 was prepared and submitted to the 7<sup>th</sup> COP of CBD in 2004. On the basis of this document, COP-7 adopted Decision VII/II on Ecosystem Approach, recognising sustainable forest management as a means to apply the ecosystem approach and the application of SFM tools and approaches.

b. The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, adopted, *inter alia*, an integrated approach for implementing sustainable forest management at national, regional and global levels. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, UNFF was also recognised as the key intergovernmental policy mechanism to facilitate and co-ordinate SFM at all levels.

c. The XII<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress, organised under the auspices of FAO in Quebec in September 2003, dealt with sustainable forest management on the theme “Forests, source of life”. The Congress urged improvements in forestry practices throughout the world and called for management measures geared to biological diversity and restoration of the landscape.

### At European level

a. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, held in Sofia in 1995, endorsed the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) and entrusted the Council of Europe and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with the Joint Secretariat. The aim of this Strategy is to apply at pan-European level the principles enshrined in the UN CBD and to adopt a pan-European approach to the preservation and sustainable use of our natural resources.

b. The PEBLDS seeks to better integrate strategic principles into forest management and identifies the conservation of forest ecosystems as one of the challenges to be addressed in the framework of pan-European environmental policies, in order to tackle against intensive silviculture/monoculture, atmospheric deposition, groundwater depletion, forest fragmentation, forest burning, land reclamation, over-exploitation and invasive alien species. In the light of the Resolution of the Second Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (Helsinki, 1993), the PEBLDS process aimed to devise and promote an action plan for biodiversity, landscape and ecological networking considerations to foster management and the use of renewable forest products.

c. The Pan-European Ecological Network developed under PEBLDS aims to achieve the main goals of the Strategy by ensuring that a full range of ecosystems, habitats, species and their genetic diversity are conserved.

d. The Ministers responsible for forests from 41 European countries and a representative of the European Community, as well as representatives from four non-European countries and 24 international organisations gathered at the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in April 2003 in Vienna. The Ministers adopted a new Framework for Co-operation between the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and the ministerial process Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (EfE/PEBLDS) (Annex 1 of Vienna Resolution 4).

e. The Ministers also signed the Vienna Declaration, which highlights the multiple roles of forests in relation to rural livelihood and urban societies, addresses the significance of strong partnerships between the forest sector and other sectors and underlines the importance to tackle global challenges. They adopted five Vienna Resolutions focused on cross-sectoral co-operation and national forest programmes, economic viability of sustainable forest management, social and cultural aspects, forest biological diversity as well as forests and climate change.

f. Shortly afterwards, at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, held in Kyiv in May 2003, the Ministers responsible for environment also adopted the above-mentioned Framework for Co-operation as part of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity. The Resolution commits the Ministers by 2008 to contribute to the implementation of the CBD’s Forest Biodiversity Expanded Programme of Work in the pan-European region through, *inter alia*:

- implementation of the objectives and activities of the Framework of Co-operation between the MCPFE and the EfE/PEBLDS;

- National Forest Programmes according to the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programme in Europe, adopted at the Vienna Conference in April 2003;

- application of the ecosystem approach.

## **Conclusions**

The participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of the Pan-European Ecological Network on the theme of “Conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of forests” organised in Krakow on 7-9 October 2004, thank:

- the Polish Government for its warm reception and for hosting the Symposium;
- the Council of Europe for the preparation of this event;
- the Liaison Unit of the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (Warsaw) for its contribution to the Symposium;
- the Swiss Federal Office of Environment, Forest and Landscape, for its financial support.

The Symposium focused on developing the four priority themes of the Framework of Co-operation for the period 2003-2005, with a view to creating synergies and facilitating a joint regional contribution to global fora.

Accordingly, the participants have agreed on the following:

- to recommend to the Governments of all European countries, the European Community, international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe and the Bern Convention, UNEP, MCPFE, NGOs and stakeholders, that they contribute to the implementation of the appended recommendations;
- to request the Council of the PEBLDS and the Bern Convention Standing Committee to assist countries in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of these recommendations to achieve the Kyiv 2008 forest target;
- to ask, via the PEBLDS Council, the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting to consider these recommendations in its work programme.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Theme “Ecosystem approach”

1. Develop baseline references for forest ecosystem types in order to understand thresholds for their resilience.
2. Further develop decision support systems to understand, predict, monitor and communicate the complexity of forest ecosystem processes.
3. Highlight the role of the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management in maximising the economic value of forests.
4. Encourage the use of landscape restoration approaches to regenerate degraded forest areas, with the involvement of local stakeholders.
5. Integrate non-protected intact forests with high potential for biodiversity conservation into the large-scale ecological network.
6. Establish large-scale ecological corridors within and between forests in Europe (including transboundary corridors) in order to ensure pan-European ecological integrity.
7. Analyse potential threats to forest corridors (forest fragmentation, transport infrastructure, settlement development, illegal logging, poaching and invasive alien species) and develop and implement appropriate mitigation methods.
8. Encourage the implementation of policies integrating biodiversity enhancement in forest management practices, emphasising the major contribution to biodiversity made by invertebrates.
9. Increase preventive measures to reduce human-induced forest fires.
10. Develop strategies to prevent and control invasive alien species in forest ecosystems.
11. Mitigate negative impacts of high populations of ungulates on other components of forest ecosystem.

### 2. Theme “Protected forest areas”

1. Extend biodiversity maintenance into commercially exploited forests.
2. Identify the potential role and functional impact of managed productive forests on the network of protected areas.
3. Align protection regimes in transboundary protected forests to ensure consistent management approaches.
4. Determine minimum proportions of different categories of forest protection, with special concern for strictly protected areas, versus overall forested area.
5. Prevent and mitigate loss of forest biological diversity due to fragmentation and isolation, and restore ecological connectivity, where appropriate.
6. Determine biodiversity indicators for monitoring the components of ecological networks.
7. Involve different stakeholders in the establishment of forest-related ecological networks and promote public awareness.

### **3. Theme “Forest law enforcement with regard to biodiversity conservation”**

1. Strengthen human capacity and increase financial resources to implement and enforce forest laws.
2. Strengthen horizontal and vertical co-operation between institutions responsible for forest issues and biodiversity and landscape protection, as part of a cross-sectoral and integrated approach to rural development.
3. Develop, adapt and strengthen forest legislation consistent with socio-economic considerations, multifunctional use of forests and the ecosystem approach, taking into account the tools developed for sustainable forest management.
4. Launch public awareness and education campaigns, in particular for private forest owners, and develop programmes to engage local communities.
5. Review existing incentive measures in forest management to identify and phase out incentives that cause or contribute to loss of biodiversity.
6. Develop economic incentives to enhance biodiversity conservation, in particular in private forests.
7. Develop and strengthen co-operative management and protection of transboundary populations of forest dependent species.
8. Explore linkages with regional processes to deal with issues related to forest law.

### **4. Theme “Elaboration of recommendations for site selection for afforestation”**

1. Introduce principles and methods of sustainable management in initial and permanent training of all the actors involved in forest management, at all levels of responsibility, with a view to achieving multi-functional management of forests and new afforestations based on an ecosystem approach.
2. Develop the system of training of individual forest owners in ecological, economic and technical terms of sustainable forest management including afforestation.
3. Improve co-operation between forestry and regional planning authorities for proper recognition and introduction of afforestation criteria in regional and local management plans.
4. Develop guidelines for afforestation, including ecological and economic criteria, for participating countries to develop their own regulations and instruments consistent with these criteria.
5. Implement afforestation practices as a multi-purpose activity, positively affecting habitats and landscapes, facilitating the establishment of ecological networks and improving biodiversity.
6. Identify potential locations of afforestation activities using indicative ecological network maps.
7. Take into account potential impacts of afforestation practices on biodiversity in adjacent ecosystems, such as river channels containing populations of the pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*.
8. Develop and strengthen monitoring systems to assess the impact of afforestation on biodiversity.
9. Promote, for core areas, corridors and other components, appropriate measures to:
  - a. avoid afforestation in core areas and other sites of high biological diversity;
  - b. develop afforestation activities contributing to the restoration of functional connectivity and ecological corridors;
  - c. encourage the use of indigenous species and the use where feasible of seeds and seedlings of local provenance;
  - d. ensure soil and water protection in buffer and restoration zones; and
  - e. develop regulations on the protection of newly afforested areas.