



FORESTS IN THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Pan-European workshop on contribution
to the work of the Eighth Session of the United Nation Forum on Forests

3-5 September, 2008
Koli, Joensuu, Finland

BACKGROUND NOTE

on forest policy in the Pan-European region;
achievements, challenges and planned actions
in relation to issues to be addressed at UNFF8

*Document prepared jointly by
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Oslo-Geneva, August, 2008

I. INTRODUCTION

As part of the “MCPFE Work Programme - Pan-European Follow-up of the 5th Ministerial Conference, 5-7 November 2007, Warsaw, Poland”, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland, with the financial support of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, will organise a Pan-European workshop “Forests in the changing environment” in Koli, 3-5 September 2008.

The aim of the workshop is to discuss substantive matters of the United Nations Forum of Forests (UNFF), to be addressed by its Eighth Session under “Forests in a changing environment” agenda item (*source: Multi-year Programme of Work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for 2007 – 2015*), namely:

1. Forests and climate change
2. Reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including low forest cover countries
3. Forest and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview on developments in forests and forestry in the Pan-European region in regard to the above mentioned themes, in particular on major political achievements, joint implementation, arising challenges and future actions.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGIONAL COOPERATION ON FORESTS

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) provides a regional policy framework on forests and forestry in Europe. Within the MCPFE, ministers agree upon priorities for forests and forestry in the region.

The MCPFE was launched in 1990. It is a high-level policy process and involves 46 European countries and the European Community as signatories and around 40 organisations as well as countries from other regions as observers. It is the platform for dialogue and decision making on forest issues at the political level with the aim to protect and sustainably manage forests. The MCPFE also provides a forum for interaction between the ministers responsible for forests and the public, non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations. The involvement of stakeholders and public is a fundamental principle of the MCPFE process and it influences its decisions.

Throughout five ministerial conferences, the MCPFE has defined main concepts underlying the idea of sustainable forest management. The implementation of the ministerial commitments is carried out by countries at the national level and through the MCPFE Work Programme at the pan-European level (Annex 1 and www.mcpfe.org) in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Process and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), as well as other partners.

The MCPFE process and its work is an example of a regional level contribution to the implementation of global commitments, including the Non-legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI) of the UNFF.

TIMBER COMMITTEE OF THE UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE/ EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION OF THE FAO

Two regional bodies of the UN system, the Timber Committee of UNECE and the FAO European Forestry Commission, have been cooperating in the field of forests and forest products since 1948. They focus on monitoring and analysis of the sector, capacity building and providing a policy forum for major issues. Their integrated work programme, implemented by a joint secretariat, was completely reviewed in 2008. The Timber Committee covers pan-Europe (including central Asia and the Caucasus) as well as North America, while the European Forestry Commission covers the FAO European region, including Russia, but not central Asia. ECE/FAO covers the forest sector as a whole, from the forest to production, consumption and trade of forest products.

Regular contributions from ECE/FAO include annual reviews of forest products markets, regional forest resource assessments, long term outlook studies, and policy forums on topical subjects including public procurement, wood energy, implications of climate change, and wood mobilisation. With partners, ECE/FAO collects and validates the core statistical series both on the forest resource and on forest products markets.

ECE/FAO works with a wide range of partners, including MCPFE, part of whose programme is implemented by ECE/FAO, as well as EU, EFI, EEA, ILO and many private sector and civil society bodies.

THE PAN-EUROPEAN BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY STRATEGY OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE MINISTERIAL PROCESS

The “Environment for Europe” process is a partnership of the member States within the UNECE region, organizations of the United Nations system represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environment centres, non-governmental organizations and other major groups. The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) was endorsed at the 3rd Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe' in 1995 with the aim of providing an innovative and proactive approach to stop and reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity values in Europe. PEBLDS provides a framework to promote a consistent approach and common objectives for national and regional action to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). PEBLDS is endorsed by the governments participating in the 'Environment for Europe' ministerial process that includes 56 countries (source: www.unece.org and www.pebls.org).

Since 1997, MCPFE cooperates closely on forest biodiversity conservation with the ministerial process “Environment for Europe” and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (EeE/PEBLDS) through joint work programmes and the “Framework for Cooperation between MCPFE and EeE/PEBLDS” adopted at their ministerial meetings respectively in Vienna and Kyiv in 2003. In Belgrade, at the 6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in 2007, the Ministers and heads of delegation recognized the achievements so far of the joint cooperation between the PEBLDS and the MCPFE and committed themselves to further support it. In addition, they committed to promote the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into national sectoral policies.

III. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AND MILESTONES OF FOREST POLICY IN PAN-EUROPEAN REGION

Since 1990, five Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) which are regarded as milestones of European forest policy took place:

- 1990 - First Ministerial Conference, Strasbourg, France
- 1993 - Second Ministerial Conference, Helsinki, Finland
- 1998 - Third Ministerial Conference, Lisbon, Portugal
- 2003 – Fourth Ministerial Conference, Vienna, Austria
- 2007 – Fifth Ministerial Conference, Warsaw, Poland

On the initiative of France and Finland, the first MCPFE conference was held in Strasbourg in 1990. This was the first political conference on forests in Europe. In Strasbourg, 30 European countries and the European Community initiated cooperation on cross-border protection of forests in Europe and adopted six Resolutions (<http://www.mcpfe.org/conferences/strasbourg>).

After the Rio Summit (1992), the Pan-European region responded to the global discussion on sustainable development by developing a common understanding on sustainable forest management for the region. At the Helsinki Ministerial Conference (1993), the forest ministers adopted policy guidelines for the sustainable management of forests in Europe. They also agreed that sustainable forest management means *the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems* (Helsinki Resolution 1: *General Guidelines for the sustainable management of forests in Europe*, 1993, http://www.mcpfe.org/system/files/u1/helsinki_resolution_h1.pdf). The concept of sustainable forest management has been further developed through other commitments, resolutions and declarations of the MCPFE.

At the 3rd Ministerial Conference (Lisbon, 1998) the ministers adopted six criteria for sustainable forest management and endorsed a set of associated indicators. The criteria and indicators aim to provide guidance for developing policies and to assess progress towards sustainable forest management. The indicators were further improved and endorsed by the ministers at the Ministerial Conference in Vienna (2003), as “*Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management*” (http://www.mcpfe.org/system/files/u1/Vienna_Improved_Indicators.pdf).

At the Lisbon Ministerial Conference the ministers also endorsed the *Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management* (PEOLG) as a framework of recommendations for sustainable forest management for practical use on a voluntary basis. The PEOLG promote sustainable forest management in Europe by translating international commitments to the operational level of forest management planning and practices (http://www.mcpfe.org/system/files/u1/lisbon_resolution_l2a2.pdf). They consist of two parts: “Guidelines for Forest Management and Planning” and “Guidelines for Forest Management Practices”.

At the 4th Ministerial Conference (Vienna, 2003) the ministers agreed on an MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe. This approach is specified in an annex to Vienna Resolution 1: *Strengthening synergies for sustainable forest management in Europe through cross-sectoral cooperation and national forest programmes* (http://www.mcpfe.org/system/files/u1/vienna_resolution_v1.pdf). It is a common understanding among the European

countries that national forest programmes constitute a participatory, holistic, inter-sectoral and iterative process of policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at national and/or sub-national level. National forest programmes are the framework for continuing work towards the further improvement of sustainable forest management at the national level and for cross-sectoral coordination, and as means for coherent implementation of forest related international commitments, including the UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD and the UNFF commitments.

At the Pan-European level the concept of sustainable forest management as defined and developed by the MCPFE is consistent with the application of the ecosystem approach to forest ecosystems in the Pan-European region. The MCPFE and PEBLDS agreed that MCPFE tools, such as: the MCPFE Work Programmes, the Framework for Cooperation between the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/PEBLDS, national forest programmes, Criteria and Indicators for sustainable forest management and PEOLG are considered as appropriate for implementing the ecosystem approach through sustainable forest management in Europe's forests. The "*Joint position of the MCPFE and the EfE/PEBLDS on the pan-European understanding on the linkage between the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management*" was agreed and endorsed by both ministerial processes in 2005 and 2006.

At the 5th Ministerial Conference (Warsaw, 2007) the main focus was put on the role of forests in mitigating climate change, in generating renewable energy and in protecting water resources. The ministers responsible for forests in Europe adopted the Warsaw Declaration (http://www.mcpfe.org/files/u1/warsaw_declaration.pdf) and two resolutions; *Warsaw Resolution 1: Forests, Wood and Energy*, (http://www.mcpfe.org/files/u1/warsaw_resolution_1.pdf) and *Warsaw Resolution 2: Forests and Water*, (http://www.mcpfe.org/files/u1/warsaw_resolution_2.pdf). The high-level political commitments made at the Warsaw Conference provide an important arrangement for actions dedicated to further implementation of sustainable forest management in Europe in the coming years.

While all commitments of the Warsaw Conference are being implemented at the national level, added value is generated through joint implementation of several activities at the pan-European level. To implement the commitments from the Warsaw Conference, the *MCPFE Work Programme - Pan-European Follow-up of the 5th Ministerial Conference, 5-7 November, 2007, Warsaw, Poland* (Annex 1) was developed and adopted by the ELM on 7-8 May 2008 in Oslo, Norway. It comprises two parts: Implementation of the Warsaw ministerial commitments and strategic direction of the MCPFE. The main thematic elements arising from the commitments at the Warsaw Conference are structured in the MCPFE Work Programme within five programme elements as follows:

- Sustainable Forest Management and Climate Change
- Wood Mobilisation and Sound Use of Wood
- Multiple Forest Ecosystem Services, including Forests and Water
- Regional-Global Cooperation and Partnership
- Cross-Cutting Activities; Communication and Outreach, and Monitoring and Reporting, including Criteria and Indicators for SFM.

The UNECE/FAO through its integrated work programme contributes to a large extent to the implementation of the MCPFE ministerial commitments. The UNECE/FAO Strategic Plan 2008 to 2013 of the Integrated Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry is being proposed with a main objective to strengthen the forest sector and its contribution to sustainable

development throughout the UNECE region. The integrated programme of work has five work areas:

- Market and statistics
- Forest Resources Assessment
- Forest Sector Outlook
- Social and Cultural Issues
- Policy and cross-sectional issues.

Periodic reports on state of Europe's forest, based on national reports, are prepared by UNECE/FAO and MCPFE jointly in order to evaluate progress made in implementation of sustainable forest management. The "*State of Europe's Forest Report, 2003*" was prepared for the 4th Ministerial Conference in Vienna, Austria. The current status and trends in implementing sustainable forest management in the Pan-European region is presented in the "*State of Europe's Forests 2007*", launched at the Ministerial Conference in Warsaw, 2007 (<http://www.mcpfe.org/node/135>). This report is a comprehensive and up-to-date description of the situation and the management of European forests as well as the related policies and institutions, structured according to the pan-European Criteria and Indicators for sustainable forest management, including for the first time, qualitative indicators.

IV. SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS OF THE UNFF8 – ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND PLANS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS IN THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGION

a. FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Through its work, the MCPFE has increased the political attention on the importance of forests with regard to climate change.

In 1990, at the Ministerial Conference in Strasbourg, ministers focused on mountain forests and their vulnerability to natural hazards and risks of climate change due to the greenhouse effect and forest fires by adopting Strasbourg Resolution 4: *Adapting the Management of Mountain Forests to New Environmental Conditions*, which outlines a set of principles for improving mountain forest management and commitments for joint projects. A more holistic approach as a policy response to climate change and its effects on forests was agreed and adopted at the Helsinki Conference (1993) within the frame of Helsinki Resolution 4: *Strategies for a Process of Long-Term Adaptation of Forests in Europe to Climate Change*. The Pan-European Criterion 1 of the MCPFE set of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management cover: Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to the global carbon cycle.

At the Vienna Conference (2003), by adopting Vienna Resolution 5, the European ministers responsible for forests, committed to promote the efficient and sound use of wood in order to replace non-renewable resources and energy intensive production techniques as well as to promote a significant increase in the efficient generation and use of bio-energy from sustainably managed forest resources and wood residues.

At the Warsaw Conference (2007), by adopting the Warsaw Declaration and Warsaw Resolution 1, ministers responsible for forests recognised the role of forests, sustainable forest management and forest products in climate change mitigation and the ongoing need for adaptation to climate change. They expressed their commitment to ensure that forests and sustainable forest management play an active role in combating the negative effects of climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures.

The total growing stock of forests in Europe amounts to 112 billion m³. In the last 15 years, an average of 358 million of m³ has been added each year, according to the “*State of Europe’s Forests 2007*”. In forest biomass 53 gig-tonnes of carbon are stored, which is an increase of 2 billion tonnes since 1990. Further substantial amounts of carbon are stored in forest litter and soils, as well as in a forest based products, but knowledge on these components remains limited.

At the Warsaw Summit the ministers committed to take measures to increase the use of wood as a renewable raw material and source of energy from sustainably managed forests. Commitments in Warsaw Resolution 1 focus on political directions for integrated response from the forest sector to climate change effects and for energy security. In particular, the role of forest ecosystems as well as forest based products in long term carbon sequestration as a contribution to mitigating climate change in the context of the post-2012 climate regime was stressed.

At the Expert Level Meeting held in Oslo on 7-8 May 2008, the participants highlighted that the activities related to SFM and climate change should make a strategic contribution towards the decisions that will be taken in the framework of the UNFCCC in the next two years. It was also a general view among the participants that the MCPFE should contribute to other policy processes related to climate change and energy.

Within the MCPFE Work Programme (Annex 1) forests and climate change constitute one major programme element. An open-ended ad-hoc working group on sustainability criteria for forest biomass production, including bio-energy will be established within the MCPFE. It was decided to finalise elaboration of pan-European afforestation and reforestation guidelines in the context of the UNFCCC. It was also decided to focus within the MCPFE Work Programme on the issue of harvested wood products in the context of climate change policies and to analyse pan-European challenges in forest adaptation to climate change (building on the global report by IUFRO). A workshop on sustainable forest management and climate change – optimising the contribution of the forest sector - is planned to be convened in 2009. The potential consequences of climate change on forest and water interactions, as well as appropriate policies and strategies for managing forests and water resources will also be explored. Finally, a workshop on the assessment of forest fire risk and innovative strategies for fire prevention is planned.

ECE/FAO has been monitoring climate change issues for many years. It published the first estimates of carbon stocks in the region’s forests in 2000 and has improved scope and coverage of the data since then. The European Forestry Commission considered the implications of climate change for forest policy at its session in 2006, and there will be a plenary session on the topic at the European Forest Week in Rome in October 2008, which should raise awareness about the forest based sector and its important contributions to mitigating climate change.

One aspect of climate change mitigation is the use of renewable energies, including wood. ECE/FAO has substantially revised (upward) the estimates of the volume of wood energy used in Europe through two Joint ECE/FAO/IEA Wood Energy Enquiries, and is exploring the consequences for forest sector policy of the strongly increased demand for wood energy and the policy support given to this use. The challenge to the sector is to supply more renewable wood energy, on a sustainable basis, while maintaining raw material supply to the forest industries and the conservation of biodiversity. This implies a much more precise understanding of potential sustainable wood supply and of how to mobilise wood in an effective and sustainable way. ECE/FAO is providing relevant data and analysis, as well as a forum for policy and research on all these issues.

b. FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, INCLUDING PROTECTED AREAS

It is recognized by the European ministers responsible for forests that the conservation of forest biodiversity in all types of forests is an essential element of their sustainable management. Forest and biodiversity conservation was one of the main issues addressed at the third Ministerial Conference in Helsinki in 1993, as a forest policy response to the objectives and measures set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Specifically, the ministers emphasized that conservation and the appropriate enhancement of biological diversity should be adequately addressed, together with other objectives set for forests, in forestry policies and legislations. Helsinki Resolution 2 provides *General Guidelines for Conservation of the Biodiversity of European Forests*.

Several of the MCPFE criteria and indicators are relevant with regard to forest biodiversity, and Criterion 4, with nine associated indicators is directed exclusively towards biodiversity in forests; *Maintenance, Conservation and the appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity of Forest Ecosystems* (Lisbon 1998). Also the *Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management* (Lisbon 1998) are of high relevance to forest biodiversity and constitute an important tool with respect to biodiversity conservation.

At the Vienna Ministerial Conference (2003), Vienna Resolution 4: *Conserving and Enhancing Forest Biological Diversity in Europe* was adopted. Among several commitments, the European countries agreed to strive for coordinated implementation of the Expanded Programme of Work on forest biological diversity of the CBD and the Proposals for Action of the IPF/IFF at all levels. They also committed to address the maintenance, conservation and enhancement of forest biological diversity in national forest programmes.

As an Annex to Vienna Resolution 4, the *MCPFE Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and Other Wooded Land in Europe* was adopted in Vienna (2003). The Guidelines provide an important tool for work towards conservation of all types of forests and aim to give a comprehensive picture of protected and protective forest and other wooded land in Europe, while keeping links to international classification systems used for all kinds of protected areas.

Since 1997 there has been a close cooperation between the MCPFE and the EfE/PEBLDS, primarily through the *Work Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000* (http://www.mcpfe.org/system/files/u1/Biodiversity_Work_Programme_1997_2000.pdf) and the *Framework of Cooperation between MCPFE and EfE/PEBLDS* (Annex 1 to Vienna Resolution 4) adopted in the Vienna and Kyiv Ministerial Conferences, 2003. The implementation of the joint Work Programme and Framework of Cooperation was recognized in the region as a good example of cross-sectoral cooperation between forestry and biodiversity sectors for the benefits of the conservation of forest biological diversity.

In 2003, the ministers of environment and heads of delegation endorsed the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity submitted by the Council of the PEBLDS at the 5th Ministerial Conference *Environment for Europe*. The overall objective of the resolution is to halt the loss of biological diversity in the pan European region by the year 2010. The governments agreed to work towards this goal through concerted actions and a joint commitment to achieve key targets in several areas, including *forest biodiversity*. Under the key target on forest biodiversity, the environment Ministers committed to contribute to the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity of the CBD in the pan European region by

2008. This will be done through, *inter alia*, implementation of the Framework for Co-operation between the MCPFE and EfE/PEBLDS, national forest programmes according to the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe and through application of the ecosystem approach.

<http://www.unece.org/envproceedings/files.pdf/Item%209/9Documents/ece.cep.108.e.pdf>

At the 6th Ministerial Conference in Belgrade, 2007, in the framework of the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Process, the Countdown 2010 initiative prepared an assessment of the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity adopted at the 5th Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe (2003). The assessment found that there was progress in the conservation of forest biodiversity and the designation of sites for the Pan-European Ecological Network, including Natura 2000 sites. However, in some countries, forest biodiversity remains threatened by fragmentation and illegal logging. Also, in some countries lack of capacity and funding for implementing targets and strategies was identified.

http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2007/ece/ece.belgrade_conf.2007.inf.10.e.pdf

According to the “*State of Europe’s Forests 2007*”, about 70% of the European forests are classified as semi-natural and about 4% as plantations, while the remaining 26%, located mainly in Eastern and Northern European countries, are considered undisturbed. Over the years, forest management practices in European countries have changed in ways that promote the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, notably through the increased natural regeneration and more mixed species stands. Measures are also being taken to encourage deadwood accumulation. The area of protected forests has expanded by about 2 million ha in the last 5 years to reach almost 5% of Europe’s forests.

The report “*Europe’s Environment-the 4th Assessment*” released in October 2007 by the European Environment Agency observes that the main pressures on biodiversity continue to be urban sprawl, infrastructure development, acidification, eutrophication, desertification, overexploitation, and intensification of agriculture and land abandonment. Climate change is increasingly recognized as a serious threat, particularly to coastal, arctic and alpine habitats and species. Although there has been significant progress in creating ecological networks, particularly with the Pan-European Ecological Network and the Natura 2000 network, which now covers about 17 % of the total EU-25 land area, there is little information on the conservation status of these networks. National forest plans that link sustainable forest management with an ecosystem approach are being implemented and the annual harvest of wood remains well below its annual increment, and primary forests (those hardly affected by human activity) make up about a quarter of the total forest area. However, illegal logging and human-induced forest fires are a growing problem, particularly in South East Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Invasive alien species are increasing in the pan-European region and although the problem is recognised in most countries and strategic action is being taken, the efficiency of control measures needs to be increased by better monitoring and early warning systems.

http://reports.eea.europa.eu/state_of_environment_report_2007_1/en

Within the MCPFE Work Programme it is planned to contribute to the implementation of the relevant programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular the Expanded Work Programme on Forest Biological Diversity, and to continue to contribute to the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Target. It is planned to organise a workshop on sustainable forest management in the context of the CBD and the pan-European 2010 Target. The MCPFE and the EfE/PEBLDS will finalize the elaboration of afforestation and reforestation guidelines, including ecological guidelines. A workshop on pan-European approaches for development of measures to secure multiple forest services is also planned.

c. PREVENTING FOREST DEGRADATION IN ALL TYPES OF FORESTS AND COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

Preventing forest degradation was a major driver behind the establishment of the MCPFE. Conscious that atmospheric pollution, forest fires, global warming, major climatic events, or industrial accidents, erosion, damage caused by pests were threatening Europe's forests and being concerned that the deterioration of forests throughout Europe could lead to threats to the economic, ecological, social and cultural values of forests, the First Ministerial Conference was launched in Strasbourg, France, in 1990. Six Ministerial Resolutions were adopted in order to provide a platform for joint Pan-European work on preventing forest degradation in the region. In particular, Strasbourg Resolution 1: *European Network of Permanent Sample Plots for Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems* and Strasbourg Resolution 6: *European Network for Research into Forest Ecosystems* formed a basis for actions on monitoring the condition of forests in Europe. Through the ministerial commitments made in Helsinki, Lisbon, Vienna and Warsaw, the MCPFE has continued to address urgent issues that might impact forest conditions in Europe.

Over 1 billion ha, 25% of the world's forests are in Europe. The area of forests in Europe has increased by almost 13 million ha in the past 15 years mainly due to the planting of new forests and the natural expansion of forests into former agricultural land, and it continues to increase (*State of Europe's Forests Report, 2007*).

Although air quality in Europe has improved, trees are still under stress. Further reduction in emissions is needed to improve ecosystems health and vitality. According to the *State of Europe's Forests Report, 2007*, tree crown condition has stabilised, but defoliation levels are still high in more regions of Europe, indicating that trees have a reduced potential to withstand adverse environmental impacts. Further reduction of related emissions is needed to bring deposition below critical loads.

Forests in Europe have suffered severe storm damages, and forest fires continue to be a major challenge. Since 1990, large storm damages have accrued in Europe almost annually. Hundreds of thousands of hectares are burned annually. According to the *State of Europe's Forests Report, 2007*, the number of forest fires increased, but the area burnt did not in the period of 2000-2005, mainly due to more effective fire suppression in many countries.

At the Warsaw Conference (2007), the European ministers responsible for forests decided to strengthen the cooperation between the MCPFE and the UNCCD and to take measures to enhance the role of forests in combating desertification and combating floods. At the same conference, in the Ministerial Statement, the ministers expressed their readiness to explore further measures to prevent forest fires and to restore the economic, social and ecological potential of the areas in Southern Europe, affected by forest fires.

d. FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND TRADE

Illegal logging and related trade causes economic loss of revenues and plays a role in deforestation, forest degradation, loss of biodiversity, as well as decreases the value of forests, including social and cultural values. Hence, policies and actions within the areas of combating illegal activities, law enforcement, governance and trade are considered as relevant and interrelated to the issues of climate change mitigation, conservation of forest biodiversity, including protected areas, as well as to preventing forest degradation.

The MCPFE has identified illegal harvesting as a critical issue and addressed measures to tackle the problem. In Vienna (2003), at the 4th Ministerial Conference, the signatory states and the European Community, by adopting the Vienna Declaration and the five Vienna Resolutions, committed themselves to take effective measures to promote good governance and forest law enforcement, and to combat illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade. They also expressed their commitment to contribute to international efforts to this end. It was also agreed to adjust policy and legal frameworks and instruments to support sound enabling conditions for sustainable forest management that encourage investment and economic activity in the forest sector, including effective measures for forest law enforcement and for combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade.

In 2005, the MCPFE conducted an analysis of information about the impact and underlying causes of illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade on forest biological diversity as well as economic and social impacts of illegal harvesting in Europe (*“Combating illegal harvesting and related trade of forest products in Europe”*, Warsaw, 2007, http://www.mcpfe.org/files_u1/publications/pdf/illegal_2007.pdf). MCPFE in cooperation with UNECE/FAO, the European Forest Institute, the European Commission and the EfE/ PEBLDS, as well as the Government of Spain conducted a workshop on “Combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade in Europe”. The workshop objectives were to discuss and assess the different forms and causes of illegal logging in Europe; to present and discuss successful examples of combating (forest law enforcement, enforcement of license conditions, trade measures) or avoiding (adaptation of legislation for small scale use) illegal logging; to discuss a common understanding of illegal logging in the context of MCPFE and to outline the coordination in efforts between MCPFE, EU-FLEGT and the ENA/FLEG Ministerial Conference. (<http://www.mcpfe.org/documents/meetings/2005/il>)

At the 5th Ministerial Conference (Warsaw, 2007), in the Warsaw Declaration, the ministers committed to further work for strengthening efforts to promote good governance and forest law enforcement to combat illegal logging and related trade of forest products, inter alia by cooperating on and promoting public procurement policies that demand timber and timber products from legal and sustainable sources. It was also agreed that the European region will support FLEG ministerial processes and enhance collaboration between the MCPFE and the Europe and North Asia FLEG.

Within the MCPFE Work Programme it is planned to arrange a meeting of experts on forest law enforcement and governance to assess progress and lessons learned. It is also proposed to initiate activities related to timber procurement policies, both by the public and the private sector.