

8th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

A New Deal for European Forests: intervention from European Forest Institute

Marc Palahí, Director

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Dear Excellencies, Dear ladies and gentlemen,

In the next decade Europe needs to transition to a post-fossil economy, an economy that is climate-neutral, nature-positive and inclusive. However, this transition is not possible without a visionary and transformative approach to our forests. We need a **New Deal for European Forests**.

Such a Deal is urgently required because we are facing an unprecedented “forest” situation. On the one hand, **climate change and natural disturbances** are bringing many of our forests to a tipping point where they can no longer provide crucial ecosystem services - for instance, some forests could become a source of carbon instead of a sink. On the other hand, forestry and the forest-based sector have unprecedented opportunities related to their potential to generate renewable, biobased solutions. These are crucial to decarbonize our economy and create jobs for a socially fair green transition.

A New Deal for European Forests has to be rooted in sustainable forest management. This needs to be adapted and adopted according to the latest scientific knowledge so we can **take advantage of the emerging forest-based opportunities** and use them **to finance and implement the urgent adaptation-restoration measures** required to ensure the health and resilience of European forests. These new forest-sector opportunities are the main tool we have to address the unprecedented risks related to climate change.

At the same time, enhancing forest biodiversity from the genetic to the landscape level is the most important investment that the forest sector can make to ensure its economic prosperity. Policy frameworks, investments and forest management need to acknowledge this by creating synergistic incentives and integrated approaches that connect mitigation and adaptation efforts as well as bioeconomy and biodiversity goals. To achieve this we will need institutionalized mechanisms to ensure an effective, balanced and transparent **science-policy-practice dialogue** to speed up knowledge uptake by policy makers and decision-

makers. In this context, Forest Europe as a high-level policy process will need to play even a stronger role in enabling an informed dialogue, including as well other sectors, media, investors and society at large. Count on the European Forest Institute for such an important task!

Finally, an informed dialogue also needs **robust and harmonized data and information** to build a common understanding of the effects of climate change, natural disturbances, forest management and global markets on European forests. We need not only to understand the present situation but **to anticipate the forests we need, to build the future we want.**