

Statement On the Value of Alpine Forests

Taking into account the Protocol on Mountain Forests to the Alpine Convention, the European Forest Strategy of the European Commission as well as the efforts of European countries to shape a common vision for vital, productive and multifunctional forests contributing to sustainable development;

Recalling the 2011 Oslo Ministerial Decision on European Forests 2020 by the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, and the 2013 UNECE-FAO Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy and their potential for the Alpine region;

Welcoming the outcomes of the report issued by the Working Group Mountain Forests of the Alpine Convention for the period 2013-2014, elaborated according to the mandate of the XII Alpine Conference in Poschiavo (CH);

Recognising that the Alpine forests are a transboundary asset covering a significant part of the Alpine Convention's geographical area and sharing important common specific features, such as multifunctional management, ecological structure and ecosystem services;

Recognising the significant role Alpine forests can play in implementing relevant internationally agreed goals in the economic, social and environmental fields, including the CBD strategic plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and Aichi biodiversity targets, as well as in contributing to a Green Economy through provision of sustainable forest products, wood in particular, thus shaping the post 2015 agenda on sustainable development;

Recognising Alpine forests provide essential goods and services to the population at all levels, e.g. clean drinking water, protection from natural hazards, biodiversity and landscape protection, carbon storage and climate regulation, recreational and tourist functions, wood and energy production;

Being aware of the opportunities offered by Alpine forests linked to the growing demand of renewable resources (both wood and energy) and ecosystem services at the local, national and international levels;

Being aware of the high costs caused by the difficulty to access many forests properties and by their management conditions;

Taking into account that forests face similar threats and opportunities throughout the whole area of the Alpine Convention, which need to be addressed also in light of adaptation to climate change and its potential stronger effects on the vegetation patterns of Alpine forests and their exposure to extreme events;

Taking note that forest information is key to raise the awareness of the broader population concerning the benefits granted by mountain forests to the local and European society as well as the opportunities offered to the business sector in the field of sustainable production and consumption;

The Alpine Conference invites the Parties to take into consideration the following recommendations, in the frame of national and transnational policies aimed at promoting a sustainable forest management and the enhancement of the value of Alpine forests:

- To further increase transnational coordination aimed at enhancing shared knowledge, data exchange and coordination on the state and sustainable multifunctional management models of Alpine forests as well as on the potential increased impacts of and responses to main risks and hazard factors, in line with the Protocol on Mountain Forests as well as with the Multi-Annual Programme 2011-2016 of the Alpine Convention;
- To enhance the acknowledgement of the ecosystem services provided by Alpine forests, in particular protection from natural hazards, water cycle and climate regulation, aiming at ensuring

the recognition of their value for the Alpine environment and populations– also by sharing research outcomes and good practices on mechanisms supporting the provision of ecosystem services, including economic instruments and Payments for Ecosystem Services schemes;

- to enhance, through appropriate policies and incentives, an active management by owners, promoting the sustainable use of forests and fulfilling biodiversity conservation, economic and social functions, in the context of multifunctional forest management ;
- to acknowledge and promote the use of sustainable wood as an essential resource in an Alpine “Green economy” to meet the regional society’s needs for renewable raw materials and sources of energy, by promoting the adoption of life cycle assessment considering production, processing and disposal, of all relevant products, materials and energy as well as the enhancement practices of public and private green procurement;
- to foster cooperation and development of projects in the field of forest communication and information aimed at enhancing public awareness on forest benefits and the economic potential of sustainable forest management for the Alpine society.