



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 11 January 2011

5122/11

**FORETS 3
ENV 9
DEVGEN 7
RELEX 10
PROBA 3
CONUN 3**

"I/A" ITEM NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject: Ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-9)
- Adoption of Council conclusions

1. The United Nations Forum on Forests will hold its ninth session from 24 January to 4 February 2011 at the UN headquarters in New York. The main agenda item will be the theme of forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication. Another important agenda item will be the International Year of Forests 2011. The session will also include a two-day high level ministerial segment, which will be concluded with the adoption of a ministerial declaration.

2. With a view to the EU participation in UNFF-9, the Belgian Presidency prepared draft Council conclusions, which were discussed several times by the Working Party on Forestry. At its meeting on 20 December 2010, the Working Party finalised the draft Council conclusions. At the meeting of the Working Party on 11 January 2011, the Hungarian Presidency noted that consensus was reached on the final version of the conclusions¹, which took account of the written comments sent by delegations after the meeting of the Working Party on 20 December 2010.

3. In view of the above, it is suggested that the Permanent Representatives Committee endorse the consensus reached by the Working Party and recommend that the Council adopt, as an "A" item at one of its forthcoming sessions, the conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

¹ 5030/11

**Council conclusions with a view to the EU participation in the 9th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests
(UNFF-9 – New York, 24 January to 4 February 2011)**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

(I) its earlier conclusions on the international forest policy dialogue, including the Council conclusions of 5 March 2009 on the 8th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-8);

(II) the main outcomes of the 7th and 8th sessions of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and in particular the non-legally binding instruments on all types of forests (NLBI), as well as the Resolution on Means of Implementation for Sustainable Forest Management adopted at the special session of the ninth session of the Forum on 30 October 2009;

1. NOTING that the 9th Session of the UNFF will include a High Level Segment and will consider in particular social and cultural aspects of forests and an interim evaluation of the overall progress made on the implementation of the NLBI and towards the achievement of the four Global Objectives on Forests (4 GOFs); FURTHER NOTING that the United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 the International Year of Forests in its Resolution 61/193;

2. REAFFIRMING its strong commitment to sustainable forest management and RECOGNISING the important contribution it can make to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, to a low carbon economy, to livelihoods and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, as well as to mitigating the impact of and adapting to climate change, combating desertification and halting biodiversity loss and WELCOMING the opportunity to highlight this issue in the preparations for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) “Rio+20”;

3. WELCOMING the commitments made at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya in relation to forests, in particular the Strategic Plan of the CBD for the period 2011-2020 including the Aichi targets and work by the Ad Hoc Technical Experts Group to develop suitable complementing indicators, the decision on forest biodiversity, the decision on sustainable use of biological diversity and the decision on biodiversity and climate change. Furthermore, UNDERLINING the significant role forests should play in delivering those commitments; in this context also WELCOMING the Memorandum of Understanding between the secretariats of the UNFF and the CBD as a basis for enhanced cooperation on mutually supportive activities;
4. WELCOMING the forest related decisions in the Cancun Agreements, as adopted by the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 6th Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) held in Cancun, in particular the decision on REDD+¹ and STRESSING the need for further cooperation between the UNFF and the UNFCCC, inter alia on the development of financing mechanisms and appropriate safeguards for policy approaches on REDD+ as a positive contribution to the conservation and sustainable management of forests;
5. CONSIDERING the economic and social value of forests and the forest industry, which in Europe provide the basis for employment of around 4.5 million people, while at the global level it is estimated that 1.6 billion people depend on forests fully or in part for their subsistence, as well as all the important social functions of forests, such as recreation and the provision of other services, such as clean water and soil protection, vital for human wellbeing; WELCOMES the studies on “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” and UNDERLINES the importance of integrating the economic value of biodiversity and all ecosystem services of forests in public and private sector decision-making and of accounting for the non-market and social functions of forests;

¹ REDD+ refers to: reducing emissions from deforestation, reducing emissions from forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

6. NOTING the need for and the value of active participation of all relevant stakeholders in sustainable forest management and its related policy processes at all levels, and for the direct involvement of local people, including women and youth, inter alia through community-based forest management;
7. RECOGNISING the cultural value of forests and trees, expressed in countless ways through oral tradition, literature, poetry, art and music, as well as the spiritual value of forests as places of meditation and reflection and their symbolic value in many religions and spiritual traditions, and CONSIDERING that the recognition of these values should be further promoted;
8. EMPHASISING the continued need to strengthen international cooperation and action at all levels to foster sustainable forest management and to combat deforestation and forest degradation, inter alia by taking advantage of synergies and facilitating policy coherence and active cooperation and coordination with other forest-related conventions, agreements and processes; and STRESSING the importance of regional and sub-regional forest dialogues and in this respect, REFERRING to European examples in the Baltics, South-East Europe or the recently established Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests.
9. AGREES that the EU and its Member States should work in UNFF-9 towards the adoption of a resolution on the main theme of "Forests for people", which should highlight the integration of social and cultural values of forests and livelihoods and poverty eradication in their sustainable management, stress good governance and the need to tackle illegal logging and related trade, promote participatory approaches, recognise the role of family forest owners and the primary responsibility of forest owners and forest managers, underline the opportunities for decentralised forest management, including community-based forest management, and the high importance of clarifying tenure rights to forests and trees in many countries. The resolution should provide policy guidance to the activities of UN members, the member organisations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as other relevant international organisations and processes;

10. CALLS ON the EU Member States and the European Commission to actively support and provide contributions to the ongoing work of the UNFF on the key issue of finance for sustainable forest management, in particular the facilitative process and the work of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing, as set out in the Resolution on Means of Implementation for Sustainable Forest Management, with a view to a decision on this issue at UNFF-10 in 2013, and taking into account the progress made in the GEF and the UNFCCC COP 16 on finance for forest management;

11. CONSIDERS that Ministers and high level representatives in the High Level Segment of the UNFF-9 should agree on a Ministerial Declaration, aimed at raising the profile of forests and highlighting in particular the role of sustainable forest management, the NLBI, including the 4 GOFs and stressing the potential of integrating the total economic forest value into decision making in relation to the two main themes of the UNCSD in 2012 ('Rio+20'). The Declaration should include political commitments to:

- increase the contribution of forests to sustainable development, a green economy and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG);
- develop national forest programmes (or similar approaches) as the overall framework for implementing sustainable forest management and for balancing differences arising from diverging interests of stakeholders with respect to forests;
- effectively implement the NLBI on all types of forests;
- strengthen forest governance and encourage public participation, taking into account cultural and spiritual values of forests and safeguarding traditional forest related knowledge;
- effectively tackle illegal logging and related trade at all levels by enhancing international cooperation and promoting mutually supportive measures with the objective of eliminating the international trade in illegally harvested timber;

- enhance the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, combating desertification, as well as in halting biodiversity loss, including, where appropriate, by adopting REDD+ actions at the national level including the provision of information on how relevant safeguards are being addressed and respected to facilitate this process, and at the same time supporting cooperation at the international level, especially between the UNFF, the UNFCCC, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the CBD and promoting synergies between the work of these multilateral environmental agreements with the work of the UNFF to promote SFM and GOF's;
- review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in 2015, in which the achievement of the 4 GOFs should be evaluated, including consideration of a legally binding instrument;
- strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation at national level (including between agriculture and forestry sectors), particularly in tackling the drivers of deforestation.

12. ENCOURAGES the EU Member States, the European Commission, regional and local administrations, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and voluntary partnerships to support forest-related activities in the context of the International Year of Forests, including the promotion of the multifunctional role of forests, as well as drawing attention to success stories, replicable models and challenges to be overcome for the sustainable management of all types of forests;

13. CALLS on the UNFF Secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members to regularly review their work programmes on forests in the light of the decisions reached by relevant international processes and instruments.