

2 - 6 November 2015 Engelberg, Switzerland



UNECE



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



Dear Ms. Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor

Mr. Christian Friis Bach, UNECE Executive Secretary

Ms. Jaqueline de Quattro, President of the Conference of Cantonal Councillors Responsible for Forests

Mr. Paul Federer, Cantonal Councillor of Obwalden

Distinguished Delegates of Member States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me, on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to welcome all of you to the Joint 38th Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission, and the 72nd Session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry as well as to the European Forest week.

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Switzerland, and in particular the Swiss Federal Office for Environment, for hosting this important meeting in this beautiful town of Engelberg, and for the excellent arrangements and facilities provided to us.

2015 is proving to be a decisive year for forests and forestry, witnessing the culmination of a number of global policy processes related to and affecting forests. In May, the 11th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests reviewed the International Arrangement on Forests and decided on its future.

More recently, member countries of the United Nations negotiated a new, post-2015 development agenda, and adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs). And two weeks ago, at the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference, Ministers committed to enhancing the role of sustainable forest management in a green economy, and to explore possible ways to find common ground on the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe by 2020 at the latest.

I would like to emphasize the importance of SDGs, which are expected to have a strong influence on global and regional forest policy. Many SDGs are interrelated, and will require intersectoral coordination and collaboration. Through the SDGs, closer linkages are expected between forests and other areas of sustainable development. FAO, with its technical expertise and resources, is well-positioned to support countries in achieving their SDGs, of which at least 14 out of the 17 are related to FAO's own work.

In the same way, taking into account global developments, FAO has reviewed its own strategic framework and has adopted new cross-cutting strategic objectives, to contribute in

a more focused way to a hunger-free and sustainable world. Within this new approach, forests and forestry are no longer considered in isolation. FAO's new strategic objectives foster a more comprehensive collaboration between agriculture, fisheries, forestry and other land use sectors, to promote more integrated, inter-sectoral approaches across the rural landscape, to enhance sustainable resources management, and ultimately to eradicate hunger.

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The overall theme of this joint session and the European Forest Week is the value of forests. As you know, European forests have multiple economic, social and environmental values and functions. The sustainable management of forest resources is therefore critical in extending these values and functions to our future generations. We believe that the Joint EFC/COFFI Session and the European Forest Week is an excellent opportunity to bring the forestry community together, to increase the visibility of the economic, social and environmental aspects of forests in the region, and to better communicate the forest sector's important contribution to a green economy.

I would like to also highlight that FAO implements its overall forestry program and EFC decisions and recommendations through its regional office in Budapest and sub-regional office in Ankara, as well as through the joint FAO/UNECE Forestry and Timber Section in Geneva, and with the technical support of the FAO Forestry Department in Rome. Our operational programs within the scope of FAO's strategic objectives are implemented through our regional and sub-regional offices, while the Geneva office supports the implementation of the integrated program of Work of UNECE and FAO. We are also contributing to the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan at the European level.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you that FAO is committed to continue to support initiatives, aimed at achieving the sustainable management of forests and other natural resources, and to vigorously work towards a sustainable future where there is food for all, where poverty is eliminated and where natural resources are preserved for our future generations.

I wish all of us very fruitful discussions. Thank you.