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The Alpine Convention and the Mountain Forests Protocol: some thoughts on the experience gained

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Outline

- The Alpine Convention and the Protocols
- The Mountain Forests Protocol
- Implementation mechanism
- Some lesson learned

The Alpine Convention

- AC: approved at Salzburg (A) in **1991**
- After 4 years, in **1995**, the first ratifications: entrances into force
- The first international treaty related to an mountain ecosystem = **a reference model**
- Stress on an **inter disciplinary approach**
- Ratifying countries: different **size**, different role of the **Alpine zone**, different **targets**
- Implementation of the AC through **12 Protocols (8 approved till now)**; other Protocols can be defined in the future
- Only under the Convention on long range transboundary air pollution (1979) a large number (8) of Protocols has been approved

The Mountain Forests Protocol

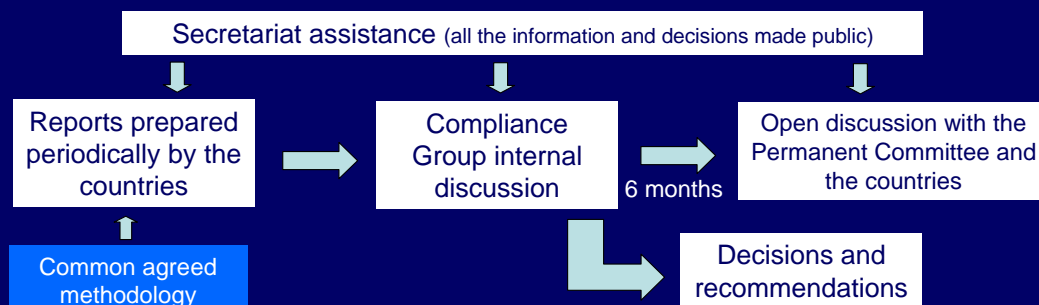
- **Approved in 1996**
- Not an *hard* but a **soft law**: principles, no quantitative targets, no indicators, no deadlines, no sanctions for no compliance
- Focus on the **protective function**, **stability** of the forest, **close-to-nature** forest management systems, controls on **overcuttings**
- Countries are asked to **report** on the measures taken to reach these objectives (e.g. natural regeneration, use of the proper species, how the protective function has been enhanced, definition of forest protected areas, ...)

The Mountain Forests Protocol

- Strong “internal” links: with the Soil Protection Protocol, the Nature and landscape protection Protocol, the Mountain Agriculture Protocol, with the Water Control Economy Protocol, ...
- Weak “external” links:
 - with processes and deliberations: MPFPE Resolutions, UNFF Proposal for Actions, FAO forest inventories, ECE / AO Timber Committee Statistics, ...
 - With the national planning instruments

Implementation mechanism

7^o Conference (2002): a mechanism supporting the fulfillment of the provision of the AC and Ps:
Compliance Group



The Compliance Group is open to external observers (also from NGOs): the only case among international conventions (with the Aarhus one).

Some lessons learned

- The key role of the **permanent Secretariat**
- The public decision makers in the AC: lack of representativeness; **need for scaling down the participation** to the process
- ... till the **involvement of the civil society**
- **Many Protocols**: a mosaic of countries' ratifications (involvement)
- **EU ratification**: which room for the coordination among the AC members countries? → CA as dynamic process = new areas of future cooperation

Are there fields for future cooperation?

Harmonization of regulations on:

- **property rights** (public access, hunting, NWFPs collection, ...),
- criteria for designing **protected areas** (Natura 2000) and for **compensating public functions** of the forests (EU Reg Development Programmes)...
- **forest management and harvesting** regulations,
- ...

New fields for future cooperation

From sharing experiences related to forest regulations to **sharing best practices**:

- Forest inventories
- Interventions after heavy storm damages and fire monitoring and fighting
- SFM certification
- Wood marketing (grading rules, market transparency, auctions organization, ...)
- How to cope with climate change
- ...

= targets of the INTERREG (Alpine Space) programme

When we look at the effects of the AC, we see that we are just at the beginning of a long way

