



Press Release
21 March 2016
Brussels

European Forest Owners, Managers, Industry and Professionals Welcome the International Day of Forests “Forests and Water”

"To build a sustainable, climate-resilient future for all, we must invest in our world's forests."

– UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

The European forest owners, managers, forest industry and professionals, represented by key stakeholders of the European forest sector: **CEPF, Copa-Cogeca, ELO, EUSTAFOR, CEI-Bois, CEPI, FECOF, UEF** and **USSE**, welcome the declaration by the UN General Assembly of the International Day of Forests on 21 March which this year has the theme “**Forests and Water**”.

Water is a vital element of all natural resources and essential to life, but nearly 80 percent of the world’s population is exposed to high levels of threat to water security. There is a growing imbalance between water supply and demand in the world, and also in Europe we increasingly need to ensure adequate water quality and quantity.

The European forest sector welcomes the opportunity to emphasize the role of forests and water. We consider that the EU needs to better communicate the strong link between forests and water. Forests have a close relationship to our water resources and sustainable forest management is of crucial importance for ensuring a multitude of water-related benefits.

As representatives of the European forest sector we would like to highlight some of the important ways in which our forests enable access to this vital resource. Forested watersheds and wetlands supply 75 percent of the world’s accessible fresh water for domestic, agricultural, industrial and ecological needs. Forests influence the amount of available water and regulate surface and groundwater flows while maintaining highest water quality. Forests reduce the effects of floodings, and prevent and reduce dryland salinity and desertification. Forests act as natural water filters, minimizing soil erosion on site and reduce sediment in water bodies.

In the context of this year’s **International Day of Forests**, we also need to mention the impact that climate change has on water and the role of forests. Climate change is one of the major challenges facing today’s society. The impacts of climate change are an imminent threat to water security, and forests themselves are vulnerable to climate change. An increased frequency of extreme weather events has an impact on both forests and water, and may result in more catastrophic events like landslides, floods and droughts.

However, forests can also help reducing the impacts of such events. Europe’s forest sector is at the forefront of combatting climate change by contributing to both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Active forest management is crucial to enhance forests adaptive capacity, making them more resilient to meet a changing climate and maintaining the vital water-related services provided by forests. ■

CEPF – Confederation of European Forest Owners

Contact: Meri Siljama meri.siljama@cepf-eu.org, www.cepf-eu.org

COPA-COGECA – European Farmers European Agri-Cooperatives

Contact: Oana Neagu oana.neagu@copa-cogeca.eu, www.copa-cogeca.be

CEI-BOIS – Confederation of European Woodworking Industries

Contact: Ward Vervoort ward.vervoort@cei-bois.org, www.cei-bois.org

CEPI – Confederation of European Pulp and Paper Industries

Contact: Annie Xystouris a.xystouris@cepi.org, www.cepi.org

ELO – European Landowners’ Organization

Contact: Ana Rocha ana.rocha@elo.org, www.europeanlandowners.org

EUSTAFOR – European State Forest Association

Contact: Gerd Thomsen associate@eustafor.eu, www.eustafor.eu

FECOF – European Federation of Municipal Woodowners

Contact: www.fecof.eu

UEF – Union of European Foresters

Contact: Michael Diemer michael.diemer@wald-rlp.de, www.european-foresters.org

USSE - Union des sylviculteurs du Sud de l'Europe

Contact: Isala Berria isalaberria@usse-eu.org, www.usse-eu.org



The “International Day of Forests” was first established by the decision of the United Nations General Assembly on 28 November 2012. It is celebrated every year on March 21st, uniting two international commemorations: the “World Forestry Day” and “Forest Day”.