



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on an EU Forest Action Plan

(2662nd Council meeting AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES - Brussels, 30 and 31 May 2005)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. Recalling the Council Resolution of 15 December 1998 on a forestry strategy for the European Union;
2. Having taken note of the report presented by the Commission on the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy in the period 1999-2004;
3. Recognizing that the experiences gained in the past implementation period of the EU Forestry Strategy show that forests play an important role in overall sustainable development, in particular in rural areas, and that at the same time forests are crucial for the fulfilment of the EU's commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity, to mitigate climate change and to combat desertification;
4. Acknowledging the economic, ecological and social relevance of the forest sector in the EU and the contribution that forests and forestry can provide to the Lisbon objectives of sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, as well as to the Gothenburg objectives of safeguarding the quantity and quality of the natural resource base;
5. Noting that the basic principles and elements identified in the Forestry Strategy for the European Union are still valid, but that its implementation needs to be adapted to the newly emerging policy context;

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6. Recognizing the limited visibility of the forest sector and the need for greater coherence of forest-related policies, as well as changes in the global, regional and national policy context, which suggest that the EU Forestry Strategy needs to be updated as a basis for the EU Forest Action Plan to take a proactive approach allowing the forest sector to enhance its competitiveness and economic viability, and to address the growing needs and expectations of society and the challenges of globalisation;
7. Considering that the EU Forestry Strategy has provided a reference framework for forest-related EU policies and initiatives, but that there is a need to strengthen coherence between these policies and initiatives, and to enhance co-ordination within the Commission and between the Commission and the Member States;
8. Welcomes the proposal put forward by the Commission to develop an EU Forest Action Plan, which should provide a coherent framework for the implementation of forest-related actions at Community and Member States level and serve as an instrument of co-ordination between different Community actions as well as between Community actions and forest policies of the Member States;
9. Invites the Commission , in close co-operation with the Member States and in consultation with stakeholders, to elaborate a proposal for this Action Plan and to present it to the Council by mid 2006;
10. Considers that the Action Plan should in a balanced way address economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainable forest management, including within the international context;
11. Recommends that the Action Plan should provide a coherent set of actions, in line with the Lisbon and the Gothenburg strategies, based on clear objectives which should interact with and provide guidance to the objectives of other Community policies, as well as to the implementation of forest-related international commitments;
12. Also recommends that the Commission, in close co-operation with the Member States, should present the existing instruments at EU level which could be used to realise the proposed actions;
13. Considers that the Action Plan should encompass both Community forest-related actions and forest-related actions in Member States, including national forest programmes;
14. Invites the Commission to enhance the existing Community means and practices to facilitate co-ordination, communication and co-operation between different policy sectors that have an influence on forestry, and the role of the relevant committees at Community level, in particular the role envisaged for the Standing Forestry Committee.

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