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### **The forest owners' contribution to shaping the EU 2020 strategy**

Forests are one of Europe's most important renewable resources. By providing a wide range of products and services, growth and jobs in rural areas forests and forest industry can compete with almost all other sources by which humans obtain essential commodities. Benefits of those can not remain unseen, especially at a time when Europe and the rest of the world struggle with the economic downturn.

The European Union should assume **leadership in developing a natural resource policy based on wood as the most renewable raw material and a natural product**. As representative of the 16 million of forest owners, CEPF promotes the concept of sustainable forest management. This addresses meeting social, economic, environmental as well as cultural goals. The forest owners have been and will remain the backbone of putting this into practice. In order to achieve this, an appropriate policy framework is required to enable the European forest based sector to reach its full potential.

Thus, we implore to consider **the multiple functions of forests and the contribution of forestry and forest based industries as key elements of future European social and economical prosperity**. Recognizing the main assets of sustainable forest management, such as the production of a variety of services as well as wood as the most promising and multifunctional natural resource, contributes to a sustainable and prosperous society based on a carbon neutral economy.

The European forest sector, based on a renewable resource, has probably the longest history of balancing economic, ecological and social values. The multifunctional management of forests guarantees the sustainable use of a major natural resource. It contributes to the development of rural areas as well as the human well-being, without putting other demands by society to risk.

The supply of timber, biomass, clear water and fresh air are just some examples of goods and services that forests provide. Currently, of all the outputs of forests, the ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere may be the most important. These and other values have to be adequately recognised while shaping the future of the European Union.

As custodians of more than half of the forest area in the European Union we urge to ensure an appropriate policy framework and to define clear solutions to current and future challenges identifying mutually agreeable strategies towards:

- **A sustainable and prosperous society based on a carbon neutral economy;** with the support of a leading role of the EU in developing a natural resource policy based on wood as the most renewable raw material, and a natural product. Concern about the climate change and the environment has never been higher.
- **A genuine sustainable policy framework for European forests;** based on a long- standing tradition of sustainable forest management, an integrated concept which equally addresses social, economic and environmental goals and the recognition of property rights. Forest owners have been and will remain the backbone and respect all aspects of sustainability equally.
- **A living countryside with respect for both the environment and people;** which encourages the contribution of forests and forest sector in reaching future goals of the post 2013 rural development policy. This shall include bio energy production as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation. The EU must investigate and pursue the opportunities for creating a system for payments for the ecosystem services provided by the European forests.
- **Taking a global responsibility and giving a local answer;** with the enhanced role of the EU in curbing deforestation by combating illegal logging effectively, without causing an extra burden for the European forest sector.

CEPF and its members believe that future EU 2020 strategy can play an important role in the process of unlocking the full potential of the forest in order to limit climate change as well as to guarantee further development towards the European Union carbon neutral and sustainable society.

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