

Can Europe truly protect forests?

Title

European countries, from Norway and Russia to Turkey and Kyrgyzstan have been negotiating for some time on the future role of forests and the compliance of international and national actions for an enhanced forest protection for almost two years now. A Legally Binding Agreement (LBA) to protect forests should include clear and ambitious biodiversity targets, and measurable outcomes that significantly contributes to forest protection and ensures compliance among countries. Central to this would be the inclusion of suitable indicators to allow for proper monitoring and evaluation of the treaty's implementation.

*?The agreement text as developed so far remains vague and therefore weak? **said** Dr Peri Kourakli the Forest Task Force Coordinator of BirdLife Europe. ?Everyone is eager to highlight the value of sustainable forest management, but the draft still does not say what this actually means in terms of forest biodiversity and ecosystem services. Moreover, the text is not really setting any limits to what a forest can sustainably supply and takes no commitment on resource efficiency and reduced consumption of forest products.? European environmental NGOs and networks, including BirdLife, were sceptical before the recent negotiations for a Legally Binding Agreement to protect forests started in Turkey since the main question concerning the *actual value of such an agreement to the protection of forests in Europe* had not been thoroughly investigated by the Ministerial Council for Forests in Europe. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia with the support of **BirdLife Austria** have previously presented **their position** on how an agreement could contribute to forest and have been frustrated with the poor improvements. Together with more than 30 international and national environmental NGOs and networks we decided to send a clear message of what we expect from the agreement. **Friedrich Wulf, Friends of the Earth Europe's Biodiversity Campaigner said:** ?Without significant improvements, this agreement will become a dangerous greenwashed marketing tool. We are in a stage that we don't have this luxury anymore.?*
