

Towards a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe

Title

Forest Europe, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe comprising of 46 countries and the EU, announced its decision of producing a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests (LBA-f) in Europe, in June 2011, to legally support the sustainable management of Europe's forests.

The first meeting of the Committee in charge of delivering the LBA-f took place recently in Vienna, Austria, where BirdLife Europe was invited to share its position to participate in the decision process. At the meeting, BirdLife Europe welcomed the concept of the LBA-f as a common legal basis for the protection and management of Europe's forests, but at the same time said that it would only support a text that ensures multi-functionality, long-term sustainability and the protection of biodiversity.

BirdLife Europe will advocate for an agreement involving all the relevant stakeholders and incorporating well-defined and countable indicators and a monitoring scheme. To ensure effective sustainability, those will have to be in line with the new EU Forest Strategy and the 2020 Biodiversity Strategy targets, such as the halt of the deterioration of the forest species status, or restoring degraded forest ecosystems. The LBA-f will also have to comprise sustainable criteria for the production and consumption of forest biomass, so biomass energy will contribute to climate change mitigation without reducing forest ecosystem services.

Hopefully, countries will soon understand the importance of the forests and the services they deliver and agree on investing on their effective sustainable management. There is no more time for half measures; our natural environment and human well-being depend on it.

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Stichting BirdLife Europe gratefully acknowledges financial support from the European Commission. All content and opinions expressed on these pages are solely those of Stichting BirdLife Europe.