

## **Jihlava Declaration**

### **on Communication on Forests and Forestry**

#### **The participants in the meeting of the EU Forest General Directors:**

(23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> June 2009, Vysočina Region, Czech Republic)

**Welcome** the report of the workshop “Taking us out of the woods”, which took place in the Czech Republic, in the Pardubice Region, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

**Recognize** that the results of the workshop can provide an important contribution to the implementation of a number of key actions (KA) of the EU Forest Action Plan namely KA 10 (Encourage environmental education and information), KA 17 (Encourage the use of wood and other forest products from sustainably managed forests) and KA 18 (Improve information exchange and communication).

**Acknowledge** that communication on forests and forestry needs to be improved to

- increase awareness of the positive state of European forests,
- improve people’s understanding of sustainable forest management as a source of multiple benefits,
- increase the attractiveness of wood as a renewable material.

**Are of the opinion** that communication and image are critical to the forest-based industries’ competitiveness, as recognised in the Commission’s Communication entitled “Innovative and Sustainable Forest-based Industries in the EU”.

**Take note of** the main conclusions of the workshop:

- There is a need for an effective strategy on communication of forests and forestry in the EU.
- The greatest gains will be made by concentrating on limited number of key communication objectives, targeted at different audiences from general public to experts and addressing public concerns and certain misperceptions and providing broader information on the role of the wood and forestry.
- Benefits will be realised by sharing communication ideas and project details more effectively.
- A strategy must assist at national and regional levels – not constrain.
- There are opportunities to support joint and concerted pan-European communication activities, such as:
  - European Forest Week (the first edition in 2008 brought together a substantial number of European, national and local activities around one central message. This provides a stepping stone for concerted and sustained activity at regular intervals).
  - Forest Pedagogy – forest related education.
  - Encouragement and promotion of renewable, sustainable and climate friendly forest products.

**Emphasize** that any future communication strategy at EU level should take into account specific national conditions and communication objectives in the Member States.

**Note that** the International Year of Forests 2011 will provide an excellent opportunity for high-profile forest related communication activities at all levels.

**Recommend that:**

- further work should be done to elaborate in detail the elements identified by the workshop and to develop a comprehensive strategic concept;

- support from communication experts should be considered in developing and implementing a communication strategy;
- the UNECE-FAO Forest Communicators Network (FCN), and its work, is further supported and utilized;
- the Commission and Member States should take forward the development and implementation of a future communication strategy involving all relevant stakeholders and communication partners at European and national levels;
- the outcomes of the European Commission's public opinion survey "Shaping Forest Communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry" should be fully taken into account.

**Request that** the European Commission and its Standing Forestry Committee to establish an ad hoc working group of the Standing Forestry Committee, engaging experts of the FCN to take the work forward.