

HAPARANDA MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON CIRCUMBOREAL COOPERATION ON FORESTS

Adopted at Haparanda, Sweden on June 26th, 2018

We, the Ministers responsible for forests and their high-level representatives, from the circumboreal countries of Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation and the United States of America,

Noting that boreal forests grow in high-latitude environments in our respective countries, and that the boreal domain represents about 30% of the global forest area;

Highlighting that boreal forests are important sources of renewable goods and services, and serve as habitat for a unique and vulnerable collection of biodiversity;

Acknowledging that, in addition to local communities relying on the forest sector, boreal forests are home to many indigenous peoples who possess traditional knowledge and rely on forests to provide resources for their livelihoods, income, and cultural and spiritual values;

Reiterating that countries in the circumboreal region are committed to sustainable forest management and report voluntarily on the environmental, social and economic status of their forests according to the criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management under the Montréal Process or Forest Europe;

Recognizing that sustainable forest management in the circumboreal region can play a critical role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as contribute to the implementation of other international outcomes including, as applicable, the Paris Agreement, adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the UN strategic plan for forests;

Recalling the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation, signed at the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council, 11 May 2017, and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Joint Declaration, signed 18-19 October 2017 in Arkhangelsk, Russia, which stressed the importance of cooperation on forest issues in the Barents region;

Further recalling the work on forests and the forest sector by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *inter alia*, through their Integrated Programme of Work;

Noting that boreal trees, soils and peatlands constitute the largest terrestrial carbon pool and that boreal forests, and their sustainable use, can contribute significantly to minimizing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to limiting further increase of global average temperature;

Expressing concern that the impact of climate change on boreal forests has the potential to alter tree growth and mortality rates, to increase the risk of disturbances such as

fires and pests, and to affect soils, peatlands and permafrost systems that store large amounts of carbon, and that these impacts will in turn alter global carbon and methane cycles;

Underscoring that boreal ecosystems are particularly under pressure from a changing climate since temperature increases in high latitudes are predicted to be higher than global average increases, and that ecosystem development and recovery in the boreal forest is typically a slow process;

Emphasizing that forest management strategies to adapt to climate change, when based on sound research and development, build resilience to changes that are often difficult to predict, and that this includes understanding the impacts of climate change and land use on biodiversity;

Noting the evolving discussions on the concept of bioeconomy and **HIGHLIGHTING** that the further development of forest-based, renewable resources into innovative bioproducts (such as biochemicals, biomaterials and bioenergy) and long-lived wood products (such as residential and commercial buildings made from wood), as well as the ecosystem services healthy forests provide, can make significant contributions to sustainable development and climate change mitigation; and that the increased use of biomass from sustainably managed forests can be a key component of a country's transition to a low carbon economy;

Noting that there are challenges and opportunities related to developing the bioeconomy using biomass from boreal forests, including quantifying the amount of sustainable forest biomass available for bioeconomy activities, and commercializing innovative bioproducts and services;

Stressing the importance of gender equality, local communities and indigenous peoples for sustainable development in boreal forests;

Further stressing the need for a skilled workforce, scientific knowledge, and research and development for the long-term competitiveness of the forest sector;

Recognizing that countries across the circumboreal region face similar challenges and opportunities, and that there are significant benefits to be gained from increased research cooperation and knowledge-sharing to address complex boreal forest issues;

Welcoming the work done by the Circumboreal Working Group (CWG) to enhance discussion and coordination amongst boreal countries; and

Further recognizing the need to support our scientists and managers in circumboreal collaborative research and cooperation;

1. *Encourage* exploring the establishment of a UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) on Boreal Forests, noting that such an approach would provide a flexible vehicle for accelerating research and knowledge exchange on boreal forests while reducing duplication of effort and encouraging the pursuit of cost-effective approaches for circumboreal forest cooperation and management;

2. *Recognize* that the establishment of a UNECE/FAO ToS is at the discretion of and dependent upon the approval from the competent governing bodies; and that the role and future of the Circumboreal Working Group would be assessed if and when a ToS is established;

3. *Welcome* the continued support and contributions to these efforts by the FAO and the UNECE;

4. *Also invite* the International Boreal Forest Research Association (IBFRA) to continue to enhance science–policy linkages and knowledge exchange on circumboreal issues, and to collaborate with the Circumboreal Working Group, and the UNECE/FAO ToS on Boreal Forests, if and when it is established.

Haparanda, 26 June 2018