



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
Ministry of Agriculture

FOREST EUROPE HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE
Sustainable Forest Management: Unlocking Forest biodiversity's potential
30 August 2022, Bonn, Germany

Statement of the Republic of Bulgaria:

First panel: SFM maintains forest biodiversity, ensuring a balance between forest ecosystem services. What are common achievements of SFM related to the maintenance of biodiversity?

Along with the intensification of fires and damages on forests, climate change leads to a change in the composition of stands and the invasion of non-typical species. The establishment of protected areas does not always guarantee the effective protection of biological diversity, due to the dynamic change in environmental conditions. One of the most effective approaches to adapt and preserve the vitality of forests and their biodiversity is the conservation, research and enrichment of the genetic resources of ecosystems. In accordance with the principles of sustainable forest management, the Republic of Bulgaria has built a network of seed production bases in which unique autochthonous stands are preserved, representing the most valuable and sustainable populations in our country. It includes 48 tree species, of which 16 are coniferous and 32 are deciduous. Additionally, about 55% of the forests are included in the Natura 2000 network and are managed in accordance with specially adopted guidelines regulating allowed economic activities. The EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 increases the ambition in biodiversity conservation measures. We believe that imposing of too restrictive requirements, without appropriate compensations, may lead to a loss of interest from the owners and managers of forest territories and ultimately have a negative effect on the state of the forests.

Second panel: What is needed in the future to further enhance forest biodiversity and guarantee forests' multi-functionality?

The Republic of Bulgaria is an example of how forestry can change the appearance of the country. At the beginning of the 20th century, a number of mountain villages were devastated by landslides and torrents, leading to adoption of plans for large-scale anti-erosion afforestation. By 1970, over 1 million ha of new forests were created, mostly of coniferous species. In addition to controlling torrential rains, these forests create stable jobs and become the basis for the development of a wood processing industry in mountainous regions. From the point of view of biological diversity, a favorable ecological environment was created for the return of the natural deciduous vegetation and its accompanying fauna. Now we are among the countries with highest biodiversity in EU.

The sustainable management and multifunctional use of forest resources is a major factor for the development of the green economy and the achievement of climate neutrality. For a long period of time, forestry has relied on traditional management methods without investing enough funds to develop innovative technologies and support scientific research for more efficient use of forest resources. EU legislative initiatives under the “Fit for 55” package will lead to increased demand for wood and forest biomass as substitutes for environmentally polluting non-recyclable products and as an alternative to fossil fuels. On the other hand, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 set higher targets for the protection and restoration of forest ecosystems. A change in forestry policy is therefore needed, enabling both the generation of non-timber incomes from forests and the maintenance of sustainable value chains for timber and timber products. It is necessary to maintain the balance between the economic, social and ecological functions of forests.

For the Republic of Bulgaria, the adoption of Ordinance on payment for ecosystem services from forests provides an opportunity for additional activities to protect and enrich biodiversity. Considering that 75% of the country's forests are state-owned, the adoption of such legislation is expected to significantly support opportunities for diversification of forest revenues.