

**MESSAGE OF THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE MCPFE -
LIAISON UNIT VIENNA**

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Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Forest Research and Management Institute for inviting the MCPFE to give a message in the opening ceremony of this conference. Furthermore, the MCPFE congratulates the Forest Research and Management Institute to its 70th anniversary and its fruitful and valuable work done in those last seven decades. We wish the Forest Research and Management Institute all the best for the coming years.

For the MCPFE, representing the pan-European forest policy process, it is a great pleasure to participate in this Conference. Research is a crucial basis for policy development and has played an important role in the MCPFE since its beginnings. Therefore, let me address the forest science and policy interface in the MCPFE in a few words.

The MCPFE is an initiative of the European countries at ministerial level. Forty-four European countries and the European Community as well as 41 observer countries and international organisations participate in this process. All participants share the same commitment: the sustainable forest management in Europe. Four Ministerial Conferences have taken place so far: the 1st Conference in 1990 in Strasbourg, the 2nd Conference in 1993 in Helsinki, the 3rd Conference in 1998 in Lisbon and the 4th Ministerial Conference, the “Living Forest Summit”, in 2003 in Vienna.

The importance of research was addressed at all four Ministerial Conferences. Furthermore, the scientific community also strongly contributed to the implementation of the ministerial decisions adopted at these Conferences in one or the other way. The six Strasbourg Resolutions were mainly implemented through research programmes and networks. For example, the European forest monitoring programme of ICP Forests constitutes the implementation of Strasbourg Resolution S1. The Chairman of ICP

Forests, Dr. Thomas Haussmann, will address this programme in the plenary session later this morning.

In the follow-up of the Helsinki Conference, the scientific community was strongly involved in the development of the Pan-European Criteria and Indicators and the Pan-European Operational Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management, inter alia, through a Scientific Advisory Group.

The preparation of the Lisbon Conference was facilitated through the active involvement of research organisations, e.g. the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). After the Lisbon Conference, the MCPFE developed a pan-European Work Programme. In implementing the various activities, the scientific community and different research organisations provided an essential input, inter alia, through COST actions on protected forest areas and national forest programmes. This also contributed to the elaboration of the documents for the up-coming 4th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

Finally, this Conference held in April 2003 in Vienna, came up with a novelty in the MCPFE process. For the first time, a Multi Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) was initiated at a Ministerial Conference. Five major groups had been invited to take part in the MSD: the forest owners, the forest industry, social NGOs, environmental NGOs and the scientific community formed by EFI, IUFRO, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the United Nations University (UNU). The scientific community stressed the importance of research for a knowledge-based, innovative forest policy formulation and implementation.

Regarding the outcome of the 4th Ministerial Conference, 40 European ministers and the European Community signed the Vienna Declaration "European Forests - Common Benefits, Shared Responsibilities" as well as five Vienna Resolutions. The documents address the future objectives for Europe's forests referring to a wide range of emerging ecological, economic and social issues. The five Vienna Resolutions cover cross-sectoral co-operation and national forest programmes, economic viability of sustainable forest management (SFM), cultural aspects of SFM, forest biological diversity as well as climate change.

In the follow-up of the Vienna Conference, the participants of the MCPFE already adopted a new Work Programme for the pan-European implementation of the Vienna decisions. The new MCPFE Work Programme defines 30 actions. Many activities are related to research. Some activities are also guided by scientific organisations as leading actors.

In concluding, I would like to emphasize forest science has played an important role for the MCPFE in the preparation and implementation of the Ministerial Conferences. Examples of this fruitful co-operation can be obtained in the work on the Pan-European Criteria and Indicators for SFM, the Pan-European Operational Guidelines for SFM as well as the common MCPFE approach on national forest programmes. The new MCPFE Work Programme for the implementation of the Vienna commitments constitutes another opportunity to strengthen the forest policy/science interface in Europe.

It is a very positive signal, that some of the issues addressed at the Vienna Conference are also part of the discussions at this International Scientific Conference organised by ICAS. In the last 70 years, the Romanian Forest Research and Management Institute highly contributed to the scientific dialogue on forests and, by participating in international research activities, it will be a valuable partner for the pan-European forest community also in the future.

Thank you for your attention.