

19th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (Rome, 16 – 20 March 2009)

EU statement on item 4 of the agenda

State of the world's forest genetic resources

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Community and its 27 Member States.

1. The EU thanks the Secretariat for the well-prepared background document on this item and the work that has been carried out by the FAO for a long time.
2. The EU recognizes the significance of forest genetic resources as expressed in the document and supports the view that genetic diversity provides the fundamental basis for the evolution of forest tree species and for their adaptation to change, in particular to climate change. Conserving forest genetic resources is therefore vital, as they are unique and irreplaceable for the future.
3. The EU acknowledges that forest genetic resources and their management and conservation are an integral part of sustainable forest management. The management and conservation of forest genetic resources form a cross-cutting issue that specifically contributes to dealing with all major challenges that forests, as well as the environment, are facing nowadays.
4. As those challenges are multiple, forests have to fulfil several functions at the same time. In this respect, the EU would like to recall the Decision IX/5 on forest biodiversity of the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP 9) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that invites Parties, other Governments, and relevant international and other organizations to promote forest restoration, including reforestation and afforestation, in line with sustainable forest management, paying particular attention to genetic diversity.
5. The EU therefore welcomes that FAO's activities on forest genetic resources are an integral part of the FAO Forestry Programme and underlines that reliable data on the status and trends of forest genetic resources is necessary for their efficient management and conservation. However, the EU is aware

of the fact that such data is still generally inadequate and that only a limited number of activities aiming at their collection have been implemented at the global level so far.

6. At the pan-European level, MCPFE has acknowledged the importance of forest genetic resources since its establishment in 1990. As a result, the European Forest Genetic Resources Network (EUFORGEN) has been operating since 1994, dealing with the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources.
7. At the EU level, the European Commission has launched a new Community programme on the conservation, characterization, collection and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture. Its aim is, *inter alia*, to promote genetic diversity and to facilitate co-ordination in the field of international undertakings on genetic resources. The "European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources" (EUFGIS) was established with the main goal to strengthen documentation about the forest genetic resources within Europe.
8. Having all that in mind, the EU would like to reiterate its commitment to sustainable use and conservation of forest genetic resources, which is, among others, expressed by the participation in relevant processes.
9. The EU therefore welcomes the decision of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) to prepare a State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources report with a view to its presentation at the Commission's session in 2013.
10. The EU believes that many other countries will support its preparation and wishes to see this report prepared with proper involvement of COFO and the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions as well as in close cooperation and synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity and relevant regional and global programmes. The EU would like to see that activities on forest genetic resources will be part of the FAO Strategy for Forests and Forestry and its action programme.

Thank you for your attention
