



*Pan-European Guidelines for  
Afforestation and Reforestation  
with a special focus on the provisions  
of the UNFCCC*

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**Adopted by the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting on  
12-13 November, 2008 and by the PEBLDS Bureau on behalf  
of the PEBLDS Council on 4 November, 2008**

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# Foreword

From their start in the early 1990s, Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) have been milestones in our work for sustainable forest management in the pan-European region. The commitments made at the ministerial conferences and the follow-up work has significantly influenced the formulation and implementation of national forest policies. The outcome of the ministerial conferences has given us the mandates to address our challenges effectively. The political declarations and concrete actions have made a significant difference: they have established a solid ground for growth and diversity in today's forests.

Climate change is one of our biggest environmental challenges, and requires quick and effective measures. Forests, sustainable forest management and forest products play a vital role in climate change mitigation. Growing forests sequester carbon and wood products continue to store carbon through their lifetime. Forest products can substitute other more energy intensive materials with higher greenhouse gas emissions, and wood is an important source of renewable energy. At the latest MCPFE conference held in Warsaw in November 2007, the ministers responsible for forests in Europe committed themselves to taking national measures for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. This includes the elaboration of pan-European guidance on afforestation and reforestation.



*Arne Ivar Sletnes*

Arne Ivar Sletnes  
Head of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Oslo

In November 2008, the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) adopted the "Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation with a special focus on the provisions of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change". These guidelines, jointly developed by the MCPFE and the PEBLDS, are targeted at afforestation and reforestation programmes that aim inter alia at carbon sequestration and reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The Guidelines provide a set of recommendations for implementing economically viable, environmentally sound, socially equitable, and culturally acceptable, afforestation and reforestation programmes and projects. They address specific pan-European issues related to balancing afforestation and reforestation needs with the requirements of other land-users, as well as considering the conservation of sites of high ecological, landscape and cultural value. Furthermore, they may serve as an example for developing and implementing relevant international programmes such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).



*R. Lamb*

Robert Lamb  
Chair, Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

# Purpose and Scope

The Kyoto Protocol and Marrakech Accords to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) include afforestation and reforestation as possible measures to reduce carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere and define respective mechanisms and modalities. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognizes the need for synergies in the implementation of both conventions and stresses that carbon sequestration activities should be conducted in accordance with sustainable use and conservation of biological diversity. Moreover the potential impact of afforestation and reforestation on forest biological diversity and other ecosystems should be taken into account. In addition, CBD signatories committed themselves to address the impacts of the production and use of biomass for energy on forest biodiversity.

At the Pan-European level, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) addressed these issues at the Vienna (2003) and Warsaw (2007) Conferences. In Vienna Resolution 5, the signatories committed themselves to contribute to the implementation of the UNFCCC inter alia, by enhancing carbon sequestration of forests and at the same time providing guidance “that afforestation and reforestation take due regard of environmental, in particular biodiversity, economic and social values, with a view to mitigating potential negative effects of large scale afforestations”. In addition, the European Forest Ministers, as well as the European Ministers of Environment in their Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity, adopted the objectives and activities of the Framework for Cooperation between the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (Efe/PEBLDS), which also included the elaboration of “Recommendations for site selection for afforestation” in the context of the decisions of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol. In the Warsaw Declaration (2007) the signatories agreed to continue the development of guidance for afforestation and reforestation and to ensure that all wood production is guided by the principles of sustainability. In Warsaw Resolutions 1 and 2, signatories committed themselves to assess afforestation and reforestation programmes as well as environmental impacts of wood production for energy.

These “Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation with a special focus on the provisions of the UNFCCC” have been developed in response to the above mandate, as well as the MCPFE Work Programme and the PEBLDS Forest Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Pan-European Guidelines have been prepared for consideration in afforestation and reforestation programmes that aim inter alia at carbon sequestration and reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions including woody biomass production.

The Guidelines form a set of recommendations for voluntary use and have been developed for national authorities as well as for other relevant bodies and stakeholders involved in respective programmes and projects. They provide guidance for implementing economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially equitable, as well as culturally acceptable, afforestation and reforestation programmes and projects. The Guidelines address specific pan-European issues in balancing afforestation and reforestation needs with the requirements of other land-users, as well as considering the conservation of sites of high ecological, landscape and cultural value. Furthermore, they may serve as an example for developing and implementing CDM projects and other respective international programmes.

These Pan-European Guidelines supplement the existing MCPFE commitments and tools to implement sustainable forest management, in particular the General Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management in Europe (MCPFE, Resolution H1) and the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines (PEOLG, MCPFE, Annex 2 of Resolution L2). They also supplement FAO’s voluntary guidelines on the responsible management of planted forests. They support synergies in the implementation of decisions of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), UNFCCC, CBD, United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and other relevant forest-related international commitments and aim at contributing to the achievement of relevant internationally agreed goals. The Guidelines are also a contribution to the deliberations in the UNFCCC on reviewing modalities and procedures for afforestation and reforestation (definition of afforestation and reforestation is enclosed in Annex 1).

# General Guidelines

1. Pan-European Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) should be used as an overall framework for afforestation and reforestation programmes and all related measures should be consistent with SFM and the application of the Ecosystem Approach to forest ecosystems in the pan-European region.
2. The Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for SFM should be used as a tool to promote and implement sustainable forest management at the management unit level.
3. Woody biomass production systems including short rotation/fast growing plantations should take into account economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects of sustainable management.
4. Synergies in the national and regional implementation of international commitments under UNFF, UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD should be promoted when carrying out afforestation and reforestation activities.
5. These guidelines should be considered in national policies and programmes related to forests and forestry (e.g. National Forest Programmes), biodiversity (e.g. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans), climate change, energy, land use planning and management, integrated water resources management and agriculture.
6. Clear administrative responsibilities within countries regarding afforestation and reforestation programmes should be established and effective information-sharing and cross-sectoral cooperation between relevant authorities and stakeholders involved should be provided.
7. Economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of planned afforestation and reforestation programmes should be assessed, as appropriate, in accordance with environmental impact assessment procedures and in consultation with local communities and stakeholders.
8. Relevant traditional knowledge should be taken into account when preparing and establishing afforestation and reforestation programmes.
9. Afforestation and reforestation areas should be included in ongoing or planned national monitoring schemes to evaluate their economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts and respective carbon balances.
10. Afforestation and reforestation projects should contribute to the maintenance or improve the provision of ecosystem goods and services at the landscape level.
11. Afforestation and reforestation projects should be promoted that benefit climate change mitigation, biomass production, biodiversity conservation, soil and water protection, and erosion and desertification control.
12. Afforestation and reforestation projects should be used to mitigate against natural hazards, (wind, storms, landslides, etc.) and the impacts of these hazards on human settlements and infrastructure.
13. Afforestation and reforestation areas should be protected against potentially injurious pests and diseases.
14. The fire risk in an area of an intended afforestation/reforestation should be assessed and afforestation and reforestation programmes should take into account national or sub-national forest fire protection plans, accordingly.
15. Research on afforestation and reforestation, such as research on species and provenance adaptation to climate change, as well as inter-disciplinary research on related economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects should be encouraged.
16. Public awareness on sustainability issues related to afforestation and reforestation and on their potential environmental, social and economic benefits should be raised.



# Ecological Guidelines

17. The precautionary principle should be applied in planning procedures for afforestation and reforestation programmes.
18. In planning procedures for site selection for afforestation and reforestation projects environmental impacts should be considered to avoid possible negative effects on areas of high ecological value, particularly the conversion of natural and semi-natural non-forest ecosystems and areas of high soil carbon stock (peatlands).
19. Native tree species, provenances and varieties or ecotypes that are well adapted to site conditions should be used for afforestation and reforestation where appropriate.
20. The need to consider adaptation to climate change should be taken into account when choosing species, provenances and varieties or ecotypes for afforestation and reforestation.
21. Species, provenances, varieties or ecotypes outside their natural range should only be used where their introduction would not endanger important and/or valuable indigenous ecosystems, flora and fauna. Those that are likely to be invasive should be avoided by using the CBD Guiding Principles for the Prevention, Introduction, and Mitigation of Impacts of Alien Species That Threaten Ecosystems, Habitats or Species.
22. A precautionary approach should be taken to the use of genetically modified trees. Ecological, socio-economic and cultural impacts, including long term effects should be analysed and a thorough, comprehensive and transparent risk assessment should be completed in accordance with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. In this context, the potential impacts of genetically modified trees on native gene pools should be fully considered.
23. Species composition and structural diversity, reflecting the natural diversity at the landscape level, should be promoted.
24. Afforestation and reforestation activities that contribute to the improvement and restoration of ecological connectivity should be promoted.
25. Use of chemicals or other substances influencing soil, water resources and biological diversity in a harmful way should be avoided. Natural, biological and mechanical interventions should be promoted as an alternative option to chemicals whenever possible.
26. Afforestation and reforestation activities should aim to maintain and protect soil and ground and surface water resources in terms of quantity and quality.



# *Socio-economic and Cultural Guidelines*

27. Afforestation and reforestation programmes that also support and enhance the economic and social well-being of indigenous and local communities, including landowners, operators, contractors and workers should be promoted.
28. Appropriate mechanisms, including legislation, should be provided for so that afforestation and reforestation follow sustainable management practices and take into account income generation, rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation.
29. Land tenure and access rights should be secured and responsibilities for management of resources as well as benefit sharing should be clarified when developing afforestation and reforestation programmes.
30. The development and enhancement of incentives for afforestation and reforestation programmes designed in accordance with these recommendations should be considered, where appropriate.
31. Cross-sectoral coherence between incentives for afforestation and reforestation programmes and projects in other relevant sectors, including rural development, energy, industry, agriculture, land use planning, water, environmental, and climate change policies should be promoted.
32. Public and private financial institutions and foundations funding relevant projects should be encouraged to use these guidelines as an evaluation tool to provide for economically viable, environmentally sound, socially equitable and culturally acceptable afforestation and reforestation.
33. Decisions regarding the implementation of afforestation and reforestation policies and programmes should include consultations with indigenous and local communities including landowners and other relevant stakeholders.
34. Landscape values, including maintenance of high value cultural landscapes, cultural heritage sites, both as defined by UNESCO, and sacred cultural sites, should be taken into account in the elaboration of policies and planning procedures for afforestation and reforestation activities.

# Annexes

## **Annex 1. Definition of Afforestation and Reforestation**

Afforestation and reforestation are defined by the UNFCCC as direct human-induced conversion of non-forested land to forested land through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources. Afforestation can take place on land that has not been covered by forest for at least 50 years. Reforestation can occur on land that

was historically forested, but was subject to another land use. (For the first commitment period, reforestation activities will be limited to reforestation occurring on those lands that did not contain forest on 31 December 1989).

(Source: FCCC/CP/2001/13/Add.1, decision 11/CP7)

## **Annex 2. List of Abbreviations**

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<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CDM</b>	Clean Development Mechanism
<b>EfE</b>	Environment for Europe
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>FCCC/CP/2001/13/ Add.1, decision 11/CP7</b>	UNFCCC. Report of the Conference of the parties on its seventh session, held at Marrakesh from 29 October to 10 November 2001. Decision 11 /CP.7 (Land use, land-use change and forestry)
<b>H1</b>	Helsinki Resolution 1
<b>L2</b>	Lisbon Resolution 2
<b>MCPFE</b>	Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe
<b>PEBLDS</b>	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
<b>PEOLG</b>	Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines
<b>SFM</b>	sustainable forest management
<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNFF</b>	United Nations Forum on Forests



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