

A Country-Led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

Background

Forests, both natural and planted, make an important contribution to national and local economies and are crucial for human well-being everywhere, including in the countries of Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia. This is reflected in the numerous initiatives and processes (both political and administrative) in the forestry sector in the countries of the region. Countries are constantly working to improve forest management. They are also striving to better integrate the forest sector into wider development and economic processes. The equitable sharing of the costs and benefits derived from forests at the national, sub-national and local levels are also an important priority.



There have been relatively few regional initiatives to address emerging forestry issues in Eastern European, Northern and Central Asian countries. One important regional process culminated in the St. Petersburg Declaration on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in Europe and North Asia (ENA-FLEG) in 2005, whereby governments committed to take action to address challenges related to forest policies and legislation, including the monitoring and enforcement of regulations on forest resource use.

In 2012, the issue for debate is the Green Economy, i.e. economic growth that aims to improve human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological impacts. In its simplest expression, a Green Economy can be thought of as one that is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. Forests and forestry are thus well placed to respond to and comply with this new development concept. Efforts to integrate the concept and requirements of a Green Economy into the forest sector in the countries of Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia are only beginning. While policy reforms have created real opportunities in many countries of the region, implementation of more sustainable forest management and the equitable distribution of benefits as well as the integration of forests into efforts to address broader challenges such as climate change and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, continue to be a challenge for most countries.

Objectives

The Lviv Forum on Forests in a Green Economy for countries in Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia will bring together different stakeholders, policy makers and international experts to share experiences and explore opportunities for implementing the concepts and requirements of the Green Economy in the forest sector. The overall aim is to make the concept meaningful, operational and beneficial for forest management and forest communities in the countries of Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia.

Specific objectives include:

- To share and discuss lessons learned from international and national experiences, including regional initiatives for the implementation of Green Economy concepts and requirements in the forest sector, with special reference to the outcome of Rio+20.
- To enhance the understanding of key trends and issues in: forest goods and services; income generation from forest-based activities; energy demands on forests; the role of forests in carbon economies; biodiversity conservation; the sustainable use of forests; and related topics.
- To strengthen cooperation and to enhance partnerships among countries and key stakeholders as they address common challenges; and
- To recommend actions to strengthen forest policies, institutions and practices that support the Green Economy, in order to bridge the gap between the existing theoretical discussions and practical needs.



Program and Themes of the Lviv Forum

The event will consist of presentations, working groups and panel discussions on the following themes:

Opening and keynotes presentations:

- State of Forests in the target region, including national case studies
- Green economy in the forest sector: concepts, opportunities and risks

Thematic sessions:

- 1- Forest governance in a Green Economy
- 2- Sustainable forest industries and products
- 3- Forest ecosystem services and the role of forests in low carbon economies
- 4- Employment and livelihood opportunities in the forest sector

Targeted field trips (based on discussion themes)

Expected Outcomes

A Common understanding of the Green Economy concept and requirements and the identification of:

- Opportunities for coordinated policy responses, capacity building and implementation of best practices;
- Instruments to improve participation and involvement of the forest sector in the Green Economy at the national, regional and local level;
- Strategies for overcoming constraints to inclusion of sustainable forest management and downstream industries into Green Economy/low carbon development activities and initiatives.
- Proposed actions to be included in the Action Plan for the Forest Sector, together with identified obstacles and possible solutions.



Venue and Timing

The Forum, to be held in English and Russian, will take place from 11 to 14 September 2012 in Lviv, Ukraine. Target countries are forest-rich and forest-poor countries in Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia.

Forum participants

Participants will include representatives of: national governments from the targeted countries in Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia; invited countries from Europe and Asia; international and regional organisations and civil society, as well as international experts on specific topics. Approximately 100-120 participants are expected.



The results will be reported to UNFF and through the side event of the UNFCCC COP.

For more information, please visit:

<http://dklg.kmu.gov.ua/forest/control/uk/index>
<http://www.lvivforumforestsingreeneconomy.info/>
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=29537>