**Recommendation 1060 (1987)**[1]

# Protecting forests

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Noting with concern:

*a.* that the damage to Europe's forests is accelerating and that a growing number of species are being affected;

*b.* that the damage sustained by forests reflects only one aspect of a deepening environmental crisis;

*c.* that, in addition, large areas of forest in the Mediterranean regions of Europe are being destroyed by fire;

2. Drawing urgent attention to the grave ecological and economic consequences of the process of forest dieback, by reason of:

2.1. increased soil erosion resulting in the topsoil being washed away, increased surface run-off and loosening of the root systems which hold the soil;

2.2. the loss of protection from rockfalls, landslides and avalanches afforded to human settlements and traffic routes by mountain forests;

2.3. acidification of the soil, leading to loss of biological activity in the soil and penetration of groundwater by pollutants;

2.4. disruption of the hydrological balance making lakes and rivers more acidic and thus causing a decline in the quality and volume of drinking water reserves;

2.5. damage to flora and fauna, resulting in a reduction in the number of species and genetic impoverishment, the extinction of plants and animals, an increase in pest infestation and adverse changes to the countryside;

2.6. the accumulation of damaged wood, entailing severe economic losses and higher operating costs for the forestry industry and in the long term rendering proper forest management impossible;

2.7. climatic changes, causing snow to thaw more quickly, with increased damage from flooding and a decline in filtering action;

3. Recalling its own recent initiatives in respect of action to combat air pollution and to protect forests, in particular its Recommendations 867 (1979) on long-range transboundary air pollution; 977 (1984) on air pollution and acid rain, 1006 (1985) on measures to combat the effects of air pollution, and 1045 (1986) on combating forest fires in Europe;

4. cknowledging that the Council of Europe member states have made efforts to control the discharge of toxic substances in recent years, wishing however to have a list of relevant recommendations and action taken on them by the Committee of Ministers; Pointing out, however, that the amounts of toxic substances

1. See Doc. 5748, report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 1 July 1987.

discharged into the environment must be reduced much further and much faster in order to ward off the imminent environmental crisis,Recommends that the Committee of Ministers propose to the member states far-reaching proposals to reduce environmental pollution based on:

5. The swift application of state-of-the-art technology to reduce discharges on a national and international scale, particularly by:

*a.* fitting devices to remove sulphur and nitrogen at all power stations burning fossil fuels and shutting down power stations where these investments would be uneconomic;

*b.* applying new combustion processes (the fluidised bed process, for example) to reduce such discharges ;

*c.* imposing further pollution-control regulations on industry;

6. The introduction of product-related measures, including :

*a.* implementing energy-conservation plans;

*b.* discouraging scales of charges which encourage consumption as well as advertising designed to increase energy consumption;

*c.* increasing the efficiency of electrical equipment and motor vehicles;

*d.* issuing regulations to make heating installations cleaner and provide homes with better thermal insulation;

*e.* making greater use of combined heat and power, and extending district heating systems;

*f.* making greater use of alternative sources of energy;

*g.* developing alternative energy concepts;

*h.* taking action to reduce energy-consumption peaks;

*i.* establishing rational, economical and environmentally acceptable energy-utilisation guidelines in accordance with the internationally recognised need to preserve air purity;

7. The adoption of transport policy measures, including:

*a.* bringing about the preparatory conditions for the marketing of unleaded petrol and for lowering the exhaust emission limits, using the possibilities afforded by catalytic converter technology, for old as well as new vehicles;

*b.* applying much more stringent emission levels for vehicles powered by diesel engines;

*c.* applying emission levels for vehicles powered by two-stroke engines;

*d.* compelling motor manufacturers henceforth to design vehicles to run on unleaded petrol;

*e.* taking action to reduce private transport while expanding public transport services;

*f.* promoting public transport by granting subsidies to make lower fares possible;

*g.* amending traffic regulations so as to give priority to public transport;

*h.* applying the "polluter pays" principle in determining taxes on motor vehicles;

*i.* reducing heavy road traffic by transferring more goods to the railways, reducing maximum permitted loads and banning goods traffic at night;

*j.* not extending the Alpine main road network (transversal routes, tourist routes) and restricting the construction of roads for goods traffic;

*k.* limiting heavy traffic in city centres and residential areas while simultaneously improving public transport services and developing urban traffic schemes which take substantial account of the needs of pedestrians and cyclists;

8. Appropriate economic and fiscal policy measures, including:

*a.* incentive schemes to make old-fashioned plant cleaner;

*b.* incentive schemes for energy conservation, and especially the use of "ecological" energy sources for domestic and industrial heating installations;

*c.* introducing environmental levies in order to create a viable system of incentives and deterrents, enable the "polluter pays" principle to be applied, and support production processes compatible with the environment;

*d.* introducing taxes to reduce packaging waste and banning certain products;

*e.* introducing levies on toxic substances such as sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, etc. ;

*f.* using tax incentives to encourage the production of vehicles which cause little harm to the environment;

9. The improvement of legislation to protect the environment from toxic substances and stricter enforcement thereof, including:

*a.* amending technical standards with a view to substantially reducing the permitted emission and deposition concentrations;

*b.* setting up a network of regional air-pollution monitoring stations, extending existing networks and publishing their findings regularly;

*c.* instituting surveys to record discharges and deposition of substances and their effects in heavily polluted areas;

*d.* raising the staffing levels of authorities concerned with environmental protection;

*e.* increasing the frequency of discharge controls ;

*f.* stepping up the penalties for contravening pollution-control regulations

*g.* introducing appropriate compensation arrangements, property protection and indemnification guarantees ;

*h.* establishing a general environmental compatibility inspectorate;

*i.* drawing up a plan for reducing air pollution, specifying how far it is to be reduced, within what time-limits and by what means;

*j.* improving international co-operation on studying, surveying and monitoring damage to forests ;

*k.* giving stronger financial backing to the new European programme for measuring and evaluating the distribution of airborne pollution over long distances (the Geneva EMEP agreement);

*l.* collaborating more closely with the developing countries on environmental issues;

*m.* rapid implementation of Recommendation 1045 on combating forest fires in Europe, inter alia, by means of:

1. more intensive public information,

2. improved surveillance of especially threatened areas and transfrontier co-operation in fighting forest fires,

3. an increase in the funds made available for reafforestation operations;

10. The establishment of a European environment fund the aim of which would be to:

*a.* provide lower-cost funding for investment in environment protection;

*b.* provide financial support for reafforestation projects in devastated forest areas ;

11. The preparation of a European convention on soil protection which would inter alia provide a basis for a reafforestation policy in Europe.