



Resolution 1753 (2010)¹

Final version

Forests: the future of our planet

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Forests are often referred to as the “lungs of our planet”. The estimated area covered by the world’s forests is approximately 38 million square kilometres, slightly more than half of which is in developing countries. Forests produce organic substances through photosynthesis, using atmospheric carbon dioxide as a source of carbon and releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. Because of their huge biomass, forests have a tremendous positive impact on the composition of the planet’s atmosphere and therefore help to counter global warming.
2. Forests perform other environmental functions. They play an important role not only in controlling the Earth’s climate but also in protecting the soil (by preventing soil erosion and floods) and water (by controlling the water balance). Forests also help to reduce desertification, by decreasing wind speed, which helps to prevent soil erosion and accumulate moisture.
3. Forests play a significant role in preserving global biodiversity. Tropical, temperate and boreal forests offer a diverse range of habitats for plants, animals and micro-organisms. The majority of the species on our planet live in forests.
4. Forests are very important for the economy of some countries while at the same time playing an environmental, social, cultural and recreational role.
5. The Parliamentary Assembly notes, however, that there has been a significant decrease in the surface area covered by forests, particularly in developing countries, where there has been an increase in illegal logging, in violation of legislation and the international conventions in force, leading to substantial losses, particularly for timber-producing countries. In many cases, the proportion of illegally produced timber far exceeds that of legally produced timber.
6. In Europe, on the other hand, the surface area covered by forests is increasing as a result of a serious scientific approach towards reforestation. However, a large proportion of the forests planted in Europe are monoculture tree plantations with little biodiversity. The Assembly also regrets that a substantial proportion of these plantations consists of alien species.
7. The Assembly underlines the fact that the importance of European forests for the conservation of nature was acknowledged in the context of the implementation of the Bern Convention and that several types of forest habitat are listed in Appendix I to Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the listing of endangered natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures and in Appendix I of the European Union’s Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC “Habitats Directive”). The Assembly also welcomes the establishment of the Emerald Network and the Natura 2000 networking programme.

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2010 (27th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12284](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Timchenko). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2010 (27th Sitting).



8. The Assembly also draws attention to the two major world conventions signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity – which concern the conservation and sustainable use of forests throughout the world.

9. The Assembly draws attention to its [Recommendation 1761 \(2006\)](#) on preventing forest fires and to the fact that most forest fires today are caused by human beings and lead to considerable losses in terms of flora and fauna. The Assembly deplores the fact that the vast majority of fires are caused directly or indirectly by people who do not comply with safety regulations.

10. The Assembly believes that it is necessary to establish more effective monitoring to curb deforestation and harmonise the legislation governing forestry in the different countries. The Assembly therefore invites the Council of Europe member and non-member states and the organisations concerned to:

10.1. set up a committee within an existing organisation (the United Nations, for instance) to be responsible for the development, adoption and enforcement of legislation designed to preserve and protect forests;

10.2. draw up international agreements on forest protection that would be binding on all the countries with significant forest resources which ratify them;

10.3. devise and introduce a system for the payment of a tax on every unit of greenhouse gas, to be used for forest rehabilitation purposes, and to be allocated to countries which have forest resources in proportion to the volumes of greenhouse gases absorbed by their forests;

10.4. register, with the aforementioned committee, the organisations concerned in countries with significant forest resources so that these organisations have the authority to monitor compliance with the new legislation and the forestry situation;

10.5. take the necessary steps to prevent and detect forest fires and improve response times and forest-fire-fighting technologies to reduce the number and extent of such fires;

10.6. develop and implement tried and tested sustainable forest management techniques;

10.7. introduce criminal sanctions for pyromaniacs;

10.8. take steps to launch education and awareness-raising campaigns with a view to preventing forest fires;

10.9. establish climate policies which take into account the role of forests as carbon sinks and stores in order to tackle worldwide environmental challenges such as global warming;

10.10. carry out reforestation in a carefully supervised and scientific manner and avoid monoculture and, particularly, the large-scale planting of alien species;

10.11. support the work being done by forestry protection and inspection departments, in particular in dealing with insects and forest diseases;

10.12. ensure that forestry management complies with the following principles:

10.12.1. use of forests taking into account their capacity for regeneration;

10.12.2. preservation and strengthening of forests' environmental and protective functions, (in particular the protection of soil and water) as well as their other functions;

10.12.3. good management and conservation of forest biodiversity;

10.12.4. setting up a procedure allowing the use of forests in accordance with their size, functions, location and environmental and economic conditions;

10.12.5. creating the conditions for forest regeneration;

10.12.6. compliance with science-based rules of use;

10.13. make it compulsory for forestry industries to use more efficient processing technologies which provide a better final output while using a smaller quantity of raw materials.

11. The Assembly also invites the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to study and encourage good practices in forest conservation at local and regional level.