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(Information)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of 15 December 1998

on a forestry strategy for the European Union

(1999/C 56/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Acknowledging the benefits of a Forestry Strategy for the European Union as set out in this Resolution based primarily on the general analysis and guidelines of the Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament;

Having regard to the existing legislation of the Council concerning the forest sector, as well as the proposals on the support of forestry measures in the Member States made within the framework of the Agenda 2000;

Considering the activities and commitments made by the European Union and its Member States in all relevant international processes related to forests, in particular the UN Conference for Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro and its follow-up⁽¹⁾, as well as the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe and its principles and recommendations for the forest sector;

1. EMPHASISES the importance of the multifunctional role of forests and sustainable forest management based on their social, economic, environmental, ecological and cultural functions for the development of society and, in particular, rural areas and emphasises the contribution forests and forestry can make to existing Community policies,
2. IDENTIFIES as substantial elements of this common Forestry Strategy

- (a) sustainable forest management as defined by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Helsinki 1993, and the multifunctional role of forests as overall principles for action;
- (b) the principle of subsidiarity, given the fact that the Treaty establishing the European Community makes no provision for a specific common forestry policy and that responsibility for forestry policy lies with the Member States, nevertheless taking into account that, pursuant to the principle of subsidiarity and the concept of shared responsibility, the Community can contribute positively to the implementation of sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests;
- (c) the contribution of existing and future measures at Community level for the implementation of a Forestry Strategy and for the support of the Member States with regard to sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests, protection of forests, development and maintenance of rural areas, forest heritage, biological diversity, climate change, use of wood as a renewable source of energy etc., while avoiding market-distorting measures;
- (d) the implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations through national or sub-national forest programmes or appropriate instruments developed by the Member States;
- (e) the active participation in all international processes related to the forest sector;
- (f) the need to improve coordination, communication and cooperation in all policy areas with relevance to the forest sector within the Commission, between the Commission and the Member States, as well as between the Member States;

⁽¹⁾ UNCED, Ungass, XI World Forestry Congress, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the first, second and third Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

- (g) the importance of sustainable forest management for the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, for the living conditions for animals and plants, and the fact that this sustainable forest management is one of many measures to combat climate change;
- (h) the promotion of the use of wood and non-wood forest products from sustainably managed forests as environmentally friendly products in line with the rules of the open market;
- (i) the contribution of forestry and forest-based industries to income, employment and other elements affecting the quality of life, whilst recognising the close connection between these two areas which influences their competitiveness and economic viability;
- (j) the need for better integration of forests and forest products in all sectoral common policies, like the Common Agricultural Policy, the Environment, Energy, Trade, Industry, Research, Internal Market and Development Cooperation policies, in order to take into account both the contribution of forests and forest products to other policies and the impacts of other policies on forests and forest products, with the aim of guaranteeing the required consistency of a holistic approach towards sustainable forest management;
- (k) the need to encourage a participatory and transparent approach with all stakeholders recognising the wide variety of ownership regimes within the Community, which necessitates the involvement of forest owners;
- (l) the need for specific approaches and actions for the different types of forests, recognising the wide range of natural, social, economic and cultural conditions of the forests in the Community;
- (m) the fact that this strategy is a dynamic process which implies further discussions and activities along the lines described above,
- sustainable forest management, based on the economic, ecological, social and cultural functions of forests,
4. AGREES that the Community take part actively in the implementation of the resolutions of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe and participate pro-actively in international discussion and negotiations on forestry-related issues, in particular in the United Nations Intergovernmental Forum on Forests,
5. CALLS on the Commission to undertake a review of the measures in Council Regulation (EEC) No 3528/86 of 17 November 1986 on the protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution⁽¹⁾, in order to evaluate and improve continuously the effectiveness of the European monitoring system of forest health, taking into account all the potential impacts on forest ecosystems,
6. ADVOCATES the continuation and evaluation of, and consideration of a possible improvement to the Community scheme for the protection of forests against fire, introduced by Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92⁽²⁾, in view of the positive impact it has had on the effectiveness of prevention measures and of the importance of coherent arrangements to protect forests, and INVITES the Commission to pay special attention to the development of the Community forest-fire information system, which enables the effectiveness of the protection measures against fires to be better assessed,
7. EMPHASISES the importance of continued development of the European Forestry Information and Communication System established by Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89⁽³⁾, by improving the quality and reliability of data on forests and, UNDERLINES the value of cooperation with the relevant national and international institutions,
8. CONSIDERS that Community measures in the framework of cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the framework of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe should promote sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of forests;

COMMUNITY ACTIONS CONCERNING FORESTS AND FORESTRY

3. EMPHASISES the contribution forests have on the promotion of employment, well-being, and the environment, which fits in with the concept of

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 326, 21.11.1986, p. 2. Regulation as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 307/97 (OJ L 51, 21.2.1997, p. 9).

⁽²⁾ OJ L 217, 31.7.1992, p. 3. Regulation as amended by Regulation (EC) No 308/97 (OJ L 51, 21.2.1997, p. 11).

⁽³⁾ OJ L 165, 15.6.1989, p. 12.

NOTES that the Commission has presented a proposal for a Council Regulation on Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development in the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the pre-accession period and that support for agricultural and rural development may cover forestry *inter alia*; CONSIDERS that the said proposal may contribute to management, conservation and sustainable development of forests in Central and Eastern Europe,

that the Community's actions can provide through the forestry measures inside rural development and the forest protection measures as well as by specific actions such as research, conservation of genetic resources, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1467/94⁽⁴⁾ and support for the application of the pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management; CONSIDERS that these activities and this added value contribute to the response to the requested actionframe of the Community Biodiversity Strategy,

9. NOTES that research activities on forestry in Community RTD programmes help to promote the sustainable management and multifunctional role of forests and the sustainable and multipurpose utilisation of forest resources as well as to improve research potential and to encourage innovation,
10. EMPHASISES the benefits of effective coordination between different policy sectors which have an influence on forestry, and of coordination at Community level; EMPHASISES the important role the Standing Forestry Committee, the Advisory Committee on Forests and Cork and the Advisory Committee on Community policy regarding forestry and forestry-based industries, set up by Decision 89/367/EEC⁽¹⁾, Decision 98/235/EC⁽²⁾, and Decision 97/837/EC⁽³⁾ respectively, have in this context, making use of these committees as ad hoc consultation for a providing expertise for all forestry-related activities in the framework of existing Community policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development, Environment, Trade, Research, Internal Market, Industry, Development Cooperation and Energy policies; and CALLS on the Commission to present a report to the Council as soon as possible on how to improve coordination,
11. CONSIDERS that the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in forests is essential to their sustainable management and that appropriate measures should be integrated in the forest programmes or equivalent instruments of the Member States in line with the pan-European 'Work Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological and Landscape Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000'; NOTES the added value
12. RECOGNISES additionally the need for the conservation and protection of areas representative of all types of forest ecosystems and of specific ecological interest; NOTES the Community contribution to the establishment, through the Natura 2000 ecological network, of protected areas consisting of 'Special Protection Areas' and 'Special Conservation Areas' set up under Directives 79/409/EEC⁽⁵⁾ and 92/43/EEC⁽⁶⁾ taking into account economic, social and cultural requirements, regional and local characteristics and the involvement of forest owners,
13. HOLDS that the role of forests as carbon sinks and reservoirs within the European Union can be best ensured through sustainable forest management and that the contribution to the European Union and Member States' climate change strategies, in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol, and can best be achieved through the protection and enhancement of existing carbon stocks, the establishment of new carbon stocks and encouragement of the use of biomass and wood-based products,
14. CONSIDERS that forestry and forest-based commercial activities fall within the open sector of the economy and that their commercial functions should be guided primarily by market forces; NOTES that the Community has established a number of instruments to ensure that competition functions effectively,
15. EMPHASISES that priority must be given to the improvement of public and consumer opinion

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 159, 28.6.1994, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1. Directive as last amended by Directive 97/49/EC (OJ L 223, 13.8.1997, p. 9).

⁽⁶⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7. Directive as last amended by Directive 97/62/EC (OJ L 305, 8.11.1997, p. 42).

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 165, 15.6.1989, p. 14.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 88, 24.3.1998, p. 59.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 346, 17.12.1997, p. 95.

about forestry and forest products, assuring them that forests are managed sustainably, noting that forest certification schemes are market-based instruments which seek to improve consumer awareness of the environmental qualities of sustainable forest management and to promote the use of wood and forest products as environmentally friendly and renewable raw materials, and that forest certification schemes should be comparable and the performance indicators should be compatible with internationally agreed principles of sustainable forest management principles and, furthermore, that they should comply with conditions regarding their voluntary nature, credibility, transparency, cost efficiency, open access and non-discriminatory character with respect to forest types and owners, and considering that one essential point in ensuring credibility should be the independent audit of forest management; INVITES the Commission to consider the possibility for further action at European Union level,

16. RECOGNISES that the existing forestry measures as well as a chapter specially dedicated to forestry inside the proposed Regulation on rural development in the Agenda 2000 ⁽¹⁾ could provide a basis

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 170, 4.6.1998, p. 67.

to implement the guidelines of this Resolution; AGREES that all common measures affecting forests and forest products should be in line with the aims and recommendations of this Forestry Strategy,

17. NOTES that the Commission intends to present

- a communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the competitiveness of the forest-based industries,
- a proposal revising Council Directive 66/404/EEC of 14 June 1966 on the marketing of forest reproductive material ⁽²⁾;
- a specific communication to the European Parliament and the Council shortly on forestry development cooperation,

18. INVITES the Commission to report to the Council on the implementation of this Forestry Strategy within five years.

⁽²⁾ OJ 125, 11.7.1966, p. 2326. Directive as last amended by the 1994 Act of Accession.