



United Nations

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## **THESIS AWARD LAUNCHED ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOREST DAY**

In order to promote scientific research on sustainable forest management, the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber section has launched a PhD Thesis Award.

The prize of US\$10,000 will be awarded to the best PhD thesis providing new data and insights into forest management, and how to balance forest conservation,

*The application form, as well the guidelines for applying, are available at: <http://timber.unece.org/index.php?id=335>.*

forest productivity and social well being. The results must be applicable to the sustainable management of forests in the ECE region.

The award is sponsored by the Geneva independent asset management house Pictet and is now open for applications until 15 June 2010. □

## **A "FOREST" MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE**

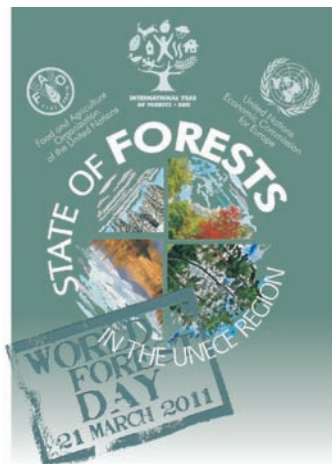
To celebrate the World Forest Day of the International Year of Forests, on 21 March 2011, the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section held a tree planting ceremony in the "Parc Ariana" which surrounds the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

A tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) from the "Art of Trees: A Forest Gallery" exhibit which was held inside the Palais from 15 to 25 February 2011, was planted by distinguished guests including the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Mr. Ján Kubiš.

As a symbolic gesture, messages for future generations from each of the distinguished guests were collected and buried in a "time capsule" at the foot of the tree. As the Rio+20 conference approaches, speakers concurred on the need to raise awareness on the vital contribution of forests to economic and social wellbeing. □



## **FORESTS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA ARE GROWING BUT REMAIN VULNERABLE TO THREATS**



On the occasion of World Forest Day, experts gathered in Geneva to review the status of and trends in forests and forest resources in Europe and North America, discussed related findings from the FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 (FRA 2010) and consider the preliminary findings from the State of Europe's Forest 2011, a report that will be launched in June 2011 at the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe in Oslo, Norway.

In 2010, the total forest area in Europe, North America, the Caucasus and Central Asia (the UNECE region) was over 1.6 billion hectares - half of which is in the Russian Federation, and 37% of which is in the United States and Canada. Altogether, the UNECE region includes 40% of the world's forests.

Since the 1990s, the forest area in Europe, North America, Caucasus and Central Asia has been increasing steadily. Forest area in the region has grown by 25 million hectares over the last 20 years (a size equivalent to the surface of the United Kingdom). In addition to forest area, the volume of wood in UNECE forests is growing due to the expansion of the forest area and increases in stock levels.

While, globally, carbon stocks are decreasing as a result of the loss of forest area, thus causing substantial carbon emissions, UNECE's forests, which store almost 80 billion tons of carbon in their biomass, are continuing to increase the amounts of atmospheric carbon that they sequester. The stock of sequestered carbon has increased by almost 5 billion tons during the last 20 years. This means that forests in Europe (including the Russian Federation) absorb around 7% of the annual GHG emissions from the region.

In addition to increasing biomass and carbon stocks, forests also provide raw material for industrial and energy purposes. UNECE forests generated about 20 billion cubic metres of woody raw material in the 1990-2010 period.

In spite of the positive numbers, catastrophic events, primarily the result of increasing climate variability, have impacted negatively on forest growth and health. North America reported the largest area of forests with insect-related health problems for 2005 compared to any other region (some 23 million hectares or 3.7% of the forest area). Insects and diseases are regarded as serious threats in European forests as well, although we know that the recorded level of damage caused to forests is less than the actual level. Between 1990 and 2005 the recorded forest area affected by these threats nearly doubled in Europe, without taking into account the Russian Federation.

Damage caused by storms, wind, snow and fires (reported on 0.5% of forest area) affect less significant areas compared to disturbances caused by insects and diseases (affected 2.7% area). However, their impact is of a much higher intensity, with devastating environmental and economic impacts at the local level. □

*For further information on the State of Forests' report, please visit: [http://www.unece.org/press/pr2011/11tim\\_p02e.htm](http://www.unece.org/press/pr2011/11tim_p02e.htm).*

*Not an official record - For information only*

## NEW UNECE PUBLICATION HELPS ADDRESS EXPLOSION HAZARDS IN SMALL COUNTRIES

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has just issued a publication that offers a regulatory framework to avoid hazards in environments with a high risk of explosion such as mines, refineries, chemical plants and mills. This heterogeneous sector plays an important part in many areas of economic activity, and represents an important component of international trade.

The booklet "Common Regulatory Framework for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere" can be used by countries as a blueprint for their legislation, and also for aligning existing national regulations with internationally harmonized best practices.

The equipment for use in such risky environments needs to be specially designed, installed, maintained and repaired to eliminate potential sparks and open flames. "Ex-equipment" therefore undergoes severe testing and certification, which is very costly. Because differing legislation often does not allow countries to accept the

testing and certification done in another country, manufacturers generally must have devices re-tested and re-certified whenever they want to enter a new market. For some companies, this investment simply may not be worthwhile for entering the smaller markets. Therefore, up until now, because of the lack of harmonized legislation for equipment for use in hazardous areas, countries that have not represented a sufficient market opportunity have not been able to access state-of-the-art equipment for use in explosive environments.

The UNECE common regulatory framework is based on and encompasses international best practice and international standards, and in particular standards from the IEC Committee Technical Committee 31. It also formally endorses the IECEx (International Electrotechnical Commission System for Certification to Standards relating to Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres) as the recommended global best practice model for verifying conformity to international standards. □

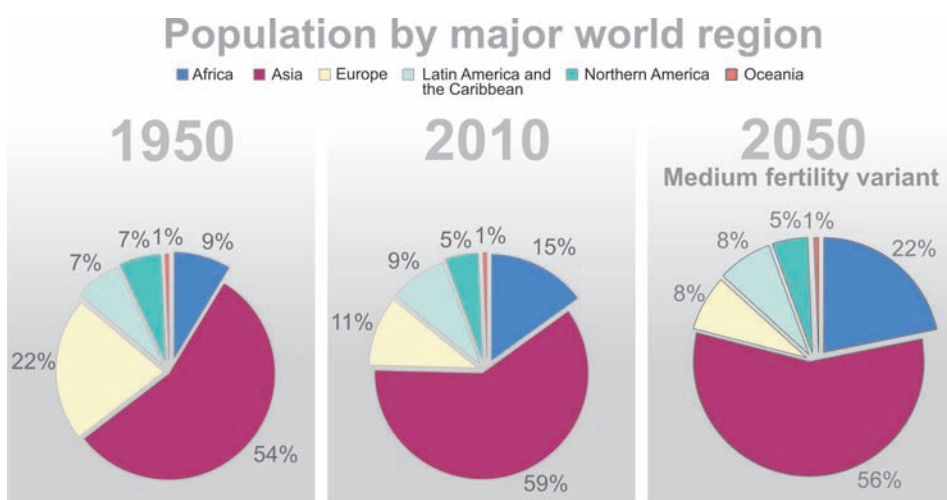
*A copy of this new UNECE Publication may be obtained from:*  
[http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/SectoralInitiatives/EquipmentForExplosiveEnvironment/SIEEE\\_CRO.pdf](http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/SectoralInitiatives/EquipmentForExplosiveEnvironment/SIEEE_CRO.pdf)

## DECLINING SHARE OF EUROPEANS IN GLOBAL POPULATION

On 15 March, Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, Chief of UNECE's Population Unit, addressed a hearing of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Brussels.

In a speech entitled "Europe within the global picture: what are the politico-economic implications of global population growth on Europe?", Ms Gaucaite Wittich told parliamentarians that the processes of demographic transition—falling fertility and lengthening lives—mean that the population of Europe is no longer growing and in many countries is already shrinking. Meanwhile the populations of other world regions continue to grow rapidly. By 2050, therefore, United Nations projections estimate that the population of Europe will make up only 8 per cent of the global population, down from 11 per cent in 2010 and 22 per cent in 1950.\*

The change in relative size of each region's population could influence a range of factors, such as international migration, environmental impacts, strategic alliances between countries and the balance of economic and political power. In addition, of course, a wealth of non-demographic factors such as political, cultural and economic structures play an even greater role; the affluence and lifestyles of a society have a much greater bearing on its environmental impacts than simply the number of people, for example.



Ms Gaucaite Wittich explained that internal demographic and social changes within Europe would also have very important parts to play in Europe's future—changes such as declining fertility, new family-building patterns, and improvements in health during later life. The one certainty is that population ageing is unavoidable. UNECE's focus on policies to mitigate the level and pace of population ageing and to adjust societies to its effects underlies the key message of the Population Unit's presentation to the hearing: "demography is not destiny". Demographic change is inescapable, but how we rise to the challenges and make the most of the opportunities is up to us. □

*For further information on the UNECE Population Unit's work related to ageing, please contact: [ageing@unece.org](mailto:ageing@unece.org) or visit the website at: [www.unece.org/pau/age/welcome.htm](http://www.unece.org/pau/age/welcome.htm).*

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