

Peer Learning Round Tables



Cluster 3: Planet

Pathways to a sustainable COVID-19 recovery
for climate and the environment

Session 3-4

Snapshot on Boreal forests' contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

Monday, 15 March 2021, 15:00-17:00

Background

The Boreal region is a vast expanse of forests, mires and lakes circling the northern hemisphere. Overall, boreal forests cover 27 per cent of the global forest area and in combination with its soils and peatlands form the largest terrestrial storage of CO₂. In the UNECE region, they cover 63 per cent of forests, constituting most important forest biome and providing a crucial contribution for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Not only is the boreal biome key to regulating the global climate, but it also contains more surface freshwater than any other biome in the world, one-third of it is underlain by permafrost.

Boreal forests play an important role in mitigating climate change, and at the same time they are strongly affected by it. Temperature increases in the boreal zone are predicted to be much higher than global averages, and while there will be parts with increased carbon sequestration, in other parts more frequent fires, thawing of permafrost and other climate-related changes will result in considerable releases of carbon into the atmosphere and profound changes to ecosystems. This will also impact the rich biodiversity of the boreal region, including iconic wildlife species such as wild forest reindeer, wolverine, lynx, beaver, brown bear and the Siberian tiger.

Rural and indigenous populations directly depend on functioning boreal forest ecosystems and the services they provide for their livelihoods and survival. In addition, boreal forests play an important role in the circular bioeconomy, as long-lived forest-based products derived from sustainably managed boreal forests offer an alternative to more carbon-intensive materials such as plastics or concrete.

Boreal forests and their sustainable management contribute to a number of SDGs and targets through:

- The sustainable management and restoration of the boreal biome (SDG 15.1, 15.2)
- The protection of water-related ecosystems within boreal forests (SDG 6.6)
- The conservation of biodiversity (SDG 15.8, 15.9)
- Timber production from boreal forests (SDG 8, SDG 12)
- Climate change mitigation (SDG 13)

Agenda (ENG/RUS)

15:00 - 15:10	Opening segment Ms. Olga Algayerova Under-Secretary General, UNECE Executive Secretary Mr. Vladimir Rakhmanin FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia
15:10 - 15:15	Moderator's welcome Ms. Maureen Whelan Manager, International Affairs, Natural Resources Canada
15:15 - 15:25	Policy action 1 Focus on the question: How do boreal forests contribute to the 2030 Agenda and SDGs? What are some of the main challenges to their sustainable management? How can we better understand and communicate the value of the boreal forest for global sustainability? Dr. Darren Sleep Senior Director, Conservation Science and Strategies at the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)
15:25 - 15:45	Moderated discussion
15:45 - 15:55	Policy action 2 Focus on the question: How do you manage boreal forests to preserve their economic and environmental services? Intervention by a representative of the Federal Forestry Agency of Russia
15:55 - 16:15	Moderated discussion
16:15 - 16:25	Policy action 3 Focus on the question: how could the resilience of the boreal forest biome to climate change be increased and vulnerability reduced? Mr. David Ståhlberg Investigator, Unit for Policy and Analysis, Swedish Forest Agency
16:25 - 16:45	Moderated discussion
16:45 - 16:55	UN Youth representative (<i>TBC</i>)
16:55 - 17:00	Closing remarks

Organizers

Lead organizer	UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
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