

FORESTA 2023: Joint Session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry

Side event: Seeds of change – Rethinking forests and cities

Tuesday, 21 November 2023

13:30-14:45 CET

San Marino, Room Arengo



Concept Note

After 200 years of unprecedented urbanization, we are today facing the negative effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and the degradation of our natural resources. Every day our cities add around 200,000 more people and by 2050 more than two-thirds of the global population will live in urban areas. Cities are also very much exposed to the effects of climate change, facing mounting climate challenges, including deadly heatwaves, rising sea levels flooding coastal areas, and intensified storms causing urban flooding. Water scarcity, increased wildfire risks, and strained energy systems further exacerbate the urban climate crisis.

At the same time, cities are essential economic and innovation hubs, and offer huge opportunities for driving the transformation towards a nature-positive economy with options to mitigate and adapt to climate change and align with the Paris Agreement's objectives.

Planning a sustainable city means planning a city with nature – green spaces and tree planting in urban areas and around them. Rethinking cities requires the strengthening of linkages between the national and local governance levels to better design and translate policies and commitments into the real world. Transforming cities means increased policy coherence, steady funding for nature-based solutions and sustainably managing and expanding urban tree and forest cover.

Rethinking forests and cities means laying the basis for a new approach for our urbanized world. A new approach where cities rethink the relationship between nature and the urban fabric, a new approach recognizing the value of urban forests that improve human health, environmental quality, and even local economies.

It is important that cities plant more trees, and not any tree but the right tree, at the right place, for the right reasons and under the right conditions. Trees that are going to survive the weather conditions of today and the climate of the future. Rethinking our relationship to nature poses questions on how to regenerate already densely built cities with forest surfaces and plants, and how to build new forest cities in those parts of the world where there is new urbanization.

Tree planting contributes to the achievement of urban-related United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well the Paris agreement, and complements various international

frameworks, agendas and strategies focused on climate action, biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. UNECE, since 2019 engages with mayors around the world through its urban action program – the **“Trees in Cities Challenge”, its expert network for urban nature**, workshops, webinars, and concrete advice and even tree planting.

The session will explore these interconnected issues to: (1) understand the contribution of urban trees and forests to SDGs and climate action; (2) address national and local urban trees and forestry actions with case studies, best practices and examples; (3) consider policy and planning needs and opportunities; and (4) reflect on the evolving relationship between cities and forests.



DRAFT AGENDA (ENG | Hybrid)

Moderator: Ms Stefania Romano, UNECE

13h30 Opening segment

Welcome remarks

H.E. Mr. Stefano Canti, Minister for the Territory, Environment, Agriculture and Civil Protection, San Marino

Mr. Daniel Griswold, UNECE Forests Land and Housing Division

Institutional greeting

Mr. Fabrizio Penna, Chief of Department, PNRR - EU Recovery and Resilience Plan, MASE (video greeting)

Mr. Francesco Corvaro, Special Envoy for Climate Change, Italy (video greeting)

13h45 Keynote speech

Mr. Giorgio Centurelli, Director General, Financial management, monitoring, reporting and control, MASE

13h55 Panel discussion (3/5 min remarks, then 15-20 mins discussion)

Lessons and priorities for urban greening

Ms. Sabrina Alfonsi, Roma Capitale, Councilor for Environment
The challenge of Greening Rome in a changing climate: urban forestry, care and planning

Mr. Yasin Çağatay Seçkin, PhD, Project Advisor & Coordinator, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
Local practices for "Green Istanbul" directing national impacts

Mr. Mark Cridge, Chief Executive Officer, London National Park City
Stewardship of new green spaces in cities

Ms. Louise Hartley, Senior Programme Manager, EarthWatch Institute
Connecting people with nature through Tiny Forests

Ms. Anna Chiesura, Asvis
Urban Green Position Paper

Mr. Philipp Höhme, International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA)
Youth perspective: the value of trees in cities

14h40 Closing