

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE
PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE



SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

outcome of the MCPFE and EfE/PEBLDS
ad hoc Working Group
on Development of the Pan-European
Understanding of the linkage between
the Ecosystem Approach
and Sustainable Forest Management

Session held in Krakow, Poland, 19-21 April, 2004.



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Introduction

The European Ministers responsible for forests at the 4th Ministerial Conference (Vienna, April 2003), as well as the European Ministers responsible for the environment at the 5th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Kiev, May 2003), endorsed the Framework for Co-operation between the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (EfE/PEBLDS).

As one of their joint activities, the Framework for Co-operation proposed a clarification of the Ecosystem Approach (EA) and sustainable forest management (SFM) concepts, building on the work achieved so far by the MCPFE on SFM.

The Framework thus follows up on the decisions taken by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (6th Conference of the Parties to the CBD, Expanded Work Programme on forest biological diversity, 2002) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) (2003, third session, Resolution 3/4, para 8) with respect to the clarification of the two concepts at the regional Pan-European level.

The Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) to determine the relationship between SFM and the EA within the European context was held in Krakow, Poland, 19-21 April 2004. The results of the AHWG are presented in this publication.

Currently, the MCPFE and PEBLDS are in the process of drawing up the "Joint Position of the MCPFE and the PEBLDS/EfE to be submitted to the CBD and UNFF Secretariats: The Pan-European Understanding of the Linkage Between the Ecosystem Approach and Sustainable Forest Management".

General Conclusions of the AHWG

The participants of the AHWG welcomed the recognition by the Parties to the CBD (Decision VII/11 of COP7) that SFM can be considered as a means of applying the Ecosystem Approach to forests. They also noted that the FAO Forest Management Working Paper entitled “*Sustainable Forest Management and the Ecosystem Approach: Two concepts, one goal*”¹ states that the two concepts aim at promoting conservation and management practices which are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and which generate and maintain benefits for both present and future generations.

The participants stated that, at the Pan-European level, the concept of SFM is defined in Resolution H1 (*General Guidelines for Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe*) of the 1993 Helsinki Conference, and developed through all other commitments, resolutions and declarations of the Ministerial Conferences held in Strasbourg – 1990, Helsinki – 1993, Lisbon – 1998 and Vienna – 2003. Taking them all into account, the analysis made at the meeting showed SFM to be the concrete means of applying the Ecosystem Approach to forest ecosystems in the European region.

As regards the request of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP7th, Kuala Lumpur, 2004: Decision VII/11) that the concepts of the Ecosystem Approach and SFM be further integrated with special emphasis on three critical issues, the participants expressed the following view:

On better cross-sectoral integration and inter-sectoral collaboration: At the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Vienna - 2003), the Ministers signed Resolution V1 on strengthening synergies for sustainable forest management in Europe through cross-sectoral cooperation and national forest programmes. The principles of the national forest programmes (nfps), following the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, pursue *a holistic and inter-sectoral approach, integration with national sustainable development strategies, as well as consistency with international commitments recognising synergies between international forest-related initiatives and conventions.*

¹ FAO (2003). Sustainable forest management and the ecosystem approach: two concepts, one goal. Wilkie M.L., Holmgren P. and Castaneda F., FAO Working Paper FM 25

On interactions between forests and other biome/habitat types within a landscape:

The participants at the meeting considered that this is mainly an issue to be taken up at the implementation level, although it has already been recognised at the Ministerial Conferences. The definition of SFM in the European context addressed concerns as to the effects on other ecosystems in MCPFE Resolution H1: *Sustainable Forest Management is the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.*²

On issues of biodiversity conservation, in particular through continued development of criteria, indicators and programmes of forest management certification and including protected areas:

Biodiversity was a concern at the Helsinki Conference (1993), at which the Ministers adopted general guidelines for the conservation of the biodiversity of European forests (Resolution H2). At the 3rd Ministerial Conference (Lisbon, 1998) the Ministers adopted a set of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, including Criterion 4: Maintenance, Conservation and Appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems. The Pan-European indicators were further developed and endorsed at the 4th Ministerial Conference (Vienna, 2003) as “Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management”. Under Criterion 4, the list of indicators includes among others, Indicator 4.9 (Protected forests): *area of forest and other wooded land protected to conserve biodiversity, landscapes and specific natural elements, according to the MCPFE Assessment Guidelines. In this regard, protected areas are seen as an integral part of SFM.*

The conservation of forest biological diversity was again addressed in Vienna by the adoption of Resolution V4: *Conserving and Enhancing Forest Biological Diversity in Europe*, which includes Annex 1:

Framework for Cooperation between the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (EfE/PEBLDS), and Annex 2: MCPFE Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and Other Wooded Land in Europe.



The participants of AHWG visiting the beavers' habitat, Tuszyna, Poland. Photo: M.G.



Selective cutting is a part of forest sustainable management. Photo: E.M.



Weeding in forest nursery gives employment to local people. Photo: E.M.



Christmas trees are one of the range of benefits of forests. Photo: E.M.

² MCPFE (1993), Resolution H1 Preamble, Para D.

Conceptual linkages between the Ecosystem Approach and Sustainable Forest Management

EA Principle	MCPFE References
Principle 1: The objectives of management of land, water and living resources are a matter of societal choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participation (Resolution V1: Strengthen synergies for sustainable forest management in Europe through cross-sectoral co-operation and National Forest Programmes; Annex to V1: MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe) ■ Partnership for implementation (Resolution L1: People, Forests and Forestry – Enhancement of Socio-Economic Aspects of Sustainable Forest Management; Annex to V1) ■ Good governance (Vienna Living Forest Summit Declaration: European Forests – Common Benefits, Shared Responsibilities, para 20) ■ Partnership and co-operation (Resolution V4: Conserving and Enhancing Forest Biological Diversity in Europe; Annex 1 to V4: Framework for Co-operation Between MCPFE and Environment for Europe/PEBLDS)
Principle 2: Management should be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decentralization (Resolution H1: General Guidelines for Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe, para D; V1; Annex to V1) ■ Good governance and forest law enforcement (Vienna Declaration, para 20) ■ Institutional and policy reform (Resolution V1)
Principle 3: Ecosystem managers should consider the effects (actual or potential) of their activities on adjacent and other ecosystems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impacts on other ecosystems (duty of care) (Resolution H1, para D: “The concern about the effects on other ecosystems was taken into account in the definition of SFM in the European context”; Resolution V1) ■ Holistic and inter-sectoral approach (Resolution V1) ■ Integration with national sustainable development strategies (Resolution V1) ■ Recommendations for site selection for afforestation (Resolution V4; Annex to Framework of Co-operation: Priority Themes for Co-operation Between MCPFE and Efe/PEBLDS for the period 2003-2005) ■ Precautionary principle (Resolution H2: General Guidelines for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of European Forests)
Principle 4: Recognizing potential gains from management, there is usually a need to understand and manage the ecosystem in an economic context. Any such ecosystem-management programme should: (a) reduce those market distortions that adversely affect biological diversity; (b) align incentives to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; (c) internalise costs and benefits in the given ecosystem to the extent feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic function is one of the pillars of SFM (Resolution H1; Resolution L1; Resolution V2: Enhancing Economic Viability of Sustainable Forest Management in Europe, Annex to Resolution L2: Pan-European Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management) ■ Identifying and removing unintended impediments (Resolution V2, para 9) ■ Removing distortions and failures of policies resulting in loss of forest biodiversity (Resolution V4, para 6) ■ Promoting the incorporation of the results of assessment and valuation of wood and non-wood goods and services into national economic and natural-resources accounting systems (Resolution L1, para 10)
Principle 5: Conservation of ecosystem structure and functioning, in order to maintain ecosystem services, should be a priority target of the EA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conserving functional forest ecosystems (Resolution H1 para 3) ■ The precautionary principle (Resolution H2) ■ Health and vitality and biodiversity (Resolution H2 and Resolution V4 especially para 15)
Principle 6: Ecosystems must be managed within the limits of their functioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Protective forests (Annex 2 to Resolution V4: MCPFE Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and Other Wooded Land in Europe). ■ Coherent approach to obtaining sufficient knowledge about the ecosystem functions and services (Resolution H2)

<p>Principle 7: The EA should be at the appropriate spatial and temporal scales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appropriate scale (Resolution H1 para 4) ■ Permanent sample plots for monitoring forest ecosystems conditions (Resolution S1: European Network of Permanent Sample Plots for Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems) ■ Network for Research into Forest Ecosystems (Resolution S6: European Network for Research into Forest Ecosystems)
<p>Principle 8: Recognizing the varying temporal scales and lag-effects that characterize ecosystemic processes, objectives for ecosystem management should be set for the long term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Future generations (Resolution H1) ■ Long-term commitments in nfps (Resolution V1) ■ Long-term commitment for protected and protective forest areas (Annex 2 of Resolution V4)
<p>Principle 9: Management must recognize that change is inevitable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Periodically updated forest management plans (Resolution H1, para 4) ■ Iterative process of nfps (Resolution V1) ■ Adaptive management (e.g. to climate change) (Resolution S4: Adapting the Management of Mountain Forests to new Environmental Conditions; Resolution H4 para 9; Resolution V5: Climate Change and Sustainable Forest Management in Europe, para 7,8, 9,10) ■ Forest management and landscape planning (Resolution V4, para 15)
<p>Principle 10: The EA should seek the appropriate balance between, and integration of, conservation and use of biological diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Balance between use and conservation (Resolution H2) ■ Forest biodiversity (Resolution V4) ■ Economic viability (Resolution L1, Resolution V2)
<p>Principle 11: The EA should consider all forms of relevant information, including scientific and indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices.</p> <p>Principle 12: The EA should involve all relevant sectors of society and scientific disciplines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cultural and social dimensions of SFM, traditional knowledge (Resolution V3: Preserving and Enhancing the Social and Cultural Dimensions of Sustainable Forest Management in Europe) ■ Innovations (Resolution H1, para 12; Vienna Declaration, para 17; Resolution V2, para 11) ■ Science, research (Resolution S1; Resolution S2: Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources; Resolution S3: Decentralized European Data Bank on Forest Fires, Resolution S4; Resolution S5: Expansion of the EUROSILVA Network of Research on Tree Physiology; Resolution S6; Vienna Declaration, para 17; Resolution V3, Resolution V4, Resolution V5) ■ Raising awareness (principles of nfps, Annex to Resolution V1) ■ Strengthening the link between the forest sector and society by increasing dialogue and mutual understanding (Lisbon Declaration) ■ Promoting partnerships, public awareness, public relations and transparency in forestry (Resolution L1, para 1) ■ Promoting training, education, capacity building (Resolution L1; Resolution V1) ■ Research, training (Resolution H1, para 12)

Existing MCPFE tools and processes for implementing SFM and the EA

The MCPFE approach to the relationships and linkages between SFM and the EA is a concrete effort to bring the EA to the implementation level.

The participants agreed that, at the implementation level, continued efforts need to be made if the common goals of SFM and the EA are to be achieved.

There are several SFM tools developed at the Pan-European level, but also others in other sectors that may contribute to and complement the implementation of SFM. At the practical level, implementation varies among countries. In many cases a combination of various tools is used to achieve various objectives.

Tools as developed and adopted by the MCPFE:

■ MCPFE Work Programme

The MCPFE Work Programme is structured according to the three pillars of SFM and aims at contributing to the sustainable development of society as a whole. The Work Programme guides the MCPFE process between the Ministerial Conferences by specifying actions that have as their aim the implementation of MCPFE Resolutions and Declarations. The current MCPFE Work Programme comprises thirty Pan-European actions, and its implementation involves relevant organisations, institutions and processes. The Programme is a dynamic concept which allows for the incorporation of emerging initiatives and activities addressing relevant issues. A report indicating status as regards the implementation of an MCPFE Work Programme is presented at each Ministerial Conference.

■ Framework for Co-operation between the MCPFE and Environment for Europe/PEBLDS

The joint “Work Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological and Landscape Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000” was endorsed as a recognition of the fact that the conservation and enhancement of forest biological diversity is a common goal of both the MCPFE and Environment for Europe/PEBLDS. This Work Programme has proved a useful tool as far as collaboration on forest biodiversity issues between the Pan-European forest and environment processes is concerned. On the basis of these experiences, the decisionmaking bodies of the MCPFE

and “Environment for Europe”/PEBLDS have underlined the benefits of continued co-operation. At the 4th Ministerial Conference (Vienna, 2003), a Framework for Co-operation between the MCPFE and Environment for Europe/PEBLDS was endorsed. The priority themes identified there as regards co-operation in the period 2003-2005 are: the ecosystem approach, protected forest areas, forest law enforcement with regard to biodiversity conservation, and recommendations on the selection of sites for afforestation.

■ National Forest Programmes

The MCPFE has worked on the National Forest Programmes in Europe since the 3rd Ministerial Conference (Lisbon, 1998), building on the outcomes of the IPF, IFF and UNFF. Consequently, the MCPFE has tackled this issue in order to develop a common understanding on the nfps in the Pan-European context - something which was adopted at the 4th Ministerial Conference (Vienna, 2003) in Resolution V1: Strengthen synergies for sustainable forest management in Europe through cross-sectoral co-operation and National Forest Programmes. The Annex of Resolution V1 describes the MCPFE Common Approach to the nfps. The National Forest Programmes constitute a participatory, holistic, inter-sectoral and iterative process of policy planning, implementation monitoring and evaluation at the national and/or sub-national levels. The principles of nfps in Europe comprise:

- participation
- a holistic and inter-sectoral approach
- an iterative process with long-term commitment
- capacity-building
- consistency with national legislation and policies
- integration with national strategies for sustainable development
- consistency with international commitments with a view to synergies between international forest-related initiatives and conventions being recognised
- institutional and policy reform

The nfp is the framework for all development of forest policy at the national level. This framework has to take international commitments into account. Principles regarding nfps are linked with those underpinning the EA.

The nfp aims to enhance consistency with the synergies between relevant initiatives and conventions in each country (including CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC).

■ Criteria & Indicators

Criteria and Indicators are policy instruments by which progress towards implementing SFM may be evaluated and reported on. Criteria define and characterise the essential elements, as well as a set of conditions or processes, by which SFM may be assessed. Periodically measured indicators reveal the direction of change with respect to each criterion. The MCPFE countries report periodically on this basis. The TBFRA (Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment) is committed to structure data on forest resources in accordance with the Criteria and Indicators.

■ Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines

Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines identify complementary actions at the operational level, which will further contribute to SFM. They are designed in line with the six Criteria of SFM and are intended to translate international commitments at the level of forest management planning and practices.

■ Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and other Wooded Land in Europe

The Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and other Wooded Land in Europe, as adopted at the 4th Ministerial Conference (Vienna, 2003) aim at a comprehensive picture of protected and protective forest and other wooded land in Europe being gained through the provision of data based on comparable terms and definitions.

The Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and other Wooded Land in Europe are relevant to Criterion 4 on Biodiversity, and Criterion 5 on Protective functions.

■ Assessment and Reporting

The political commitments taken on by both the European Ministers responsible for forests and the European Community over the last 15 years have influenced forest management in many countries. The assessment of the progress with implementing these commitments is based on national reports submitted at every Ministerial Conference.



One of the world's largest owls, the Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*), inhabits coniferous forests in Northern Europe. Photo: G.O.



The European Bison (*Bison bonasus*), the endangered species still inhabits a few sites in European large deciduous forests. Photo: G.O.



The Wild Polish Konik Horses (Tarpans) had been common in Europe before farming was developed. Nowadays, Koniks graze in some European forests and wetlands. Photo: E.M.



The Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*); Photo: G.O.



Beech forest, the Carpathian Mountains, Ukraine; Photo: G.O.



Boreal forest, Sweden; Photo: G.O.



Woodland interior is an alluvial *Alnus*/*Fraxinus* woodland, Loch Ness, Scotland; Photo: J.L.



Mediterranean forest, Lugar Nuevo, Spain; Photo: T.J.

Other tools relevant to SFM and the EA

In addition to the tools developed at the Pan-European level by the MCPFE, there are examples of other tools used in implementing SFM:

- Forest Management Plans
- Monitoring Systems
- Forest Certification
- Model and Demonstration Forests
- Assessment and Reporting
- The Forest Communicators Network
- Forest Focus
- Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiatives
- Regional conventions, such as the Carpathian Convention and the Alpine Convention
- The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)
- Ecological Networks, such as Natura 2000 or EMERALD
- Forest landscape restoration initiatives.

The AHWG participants recognized the importance of coordination and synergies with other relevant tools to the implementation of both SFM and the EA:

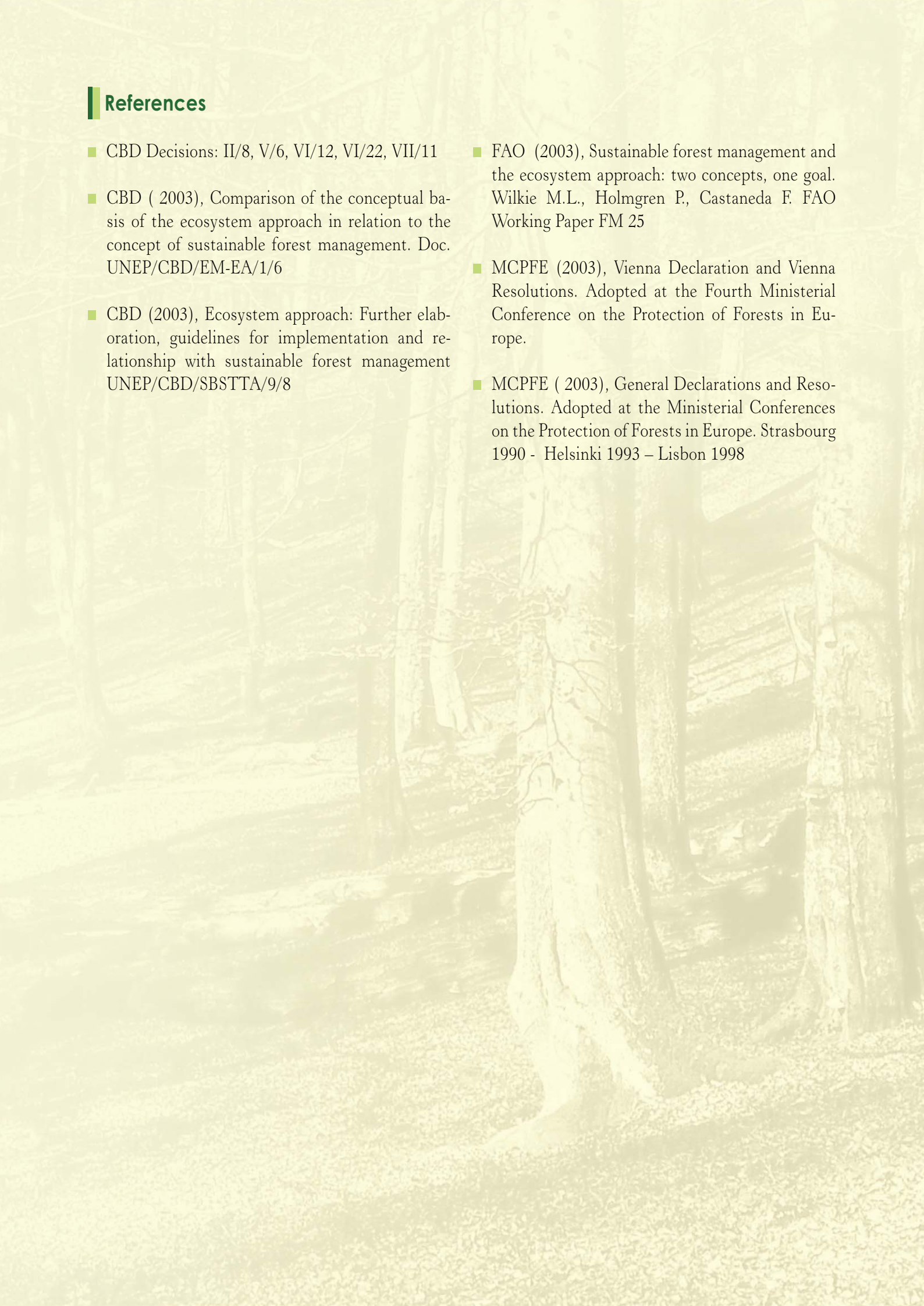
- Rural development planning
- Watershed management
- Land-use planning
- National Biodiversity, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategies and Action Plans
- Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment.

Possible areas for future efforts

Some AHWG participants recommended compiling existing case studies on application of the EA through SFM in Europe, as a contribution to the discussion on the EA within the CBD framework.

Some AHWG participants also mentioned the following areas of concern in which further elaboration may be considered:

- the connectivity between forest areas
- trans-boundary cooperation
- clarification/harmonization of terms (e.g. landscape restoration, decentralization) and methods
- guidelines for adaptive forest management
- data collection.

A background image of a forest with tall, thin trees and a dense canopy, overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting.

References

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