

CHRONICLE

The Baltic 21 Action Programme for sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region. Sector report on forests

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Introduction

Agenda 21, which was jointly adopted at UNCED in Rio de Janeiro 1992, is a global action programme for the environmental and development issues of today and for the future.

Political commitments to develop an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region were made by the Prime Ministers at the Visby Summit (Declaration of the Visby Summit, 1996), and confirmed by the Foreign Ministers at the CBSS meeting ("Towards Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region", Saltsjobaden, 1996).

The emphasis of Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region was on regional co-operation, meaning that priorities and structures were emanated from the common sharing of environmental priorities and development needs. The regional problems of the area were the driving forces. Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region emphasised environmental, including health, and spatial planning aspects of sustainable development in the region.

The programme involved seven sectors: industry, energy, transportation, agriculture, forests, fishery and tourism. Finland and Lithuania were appointed as leading parties in the Forests sector.

Key elements for all the sectors within Baltic 21 include definition, indicators and scenario for sustainable development and action programme to achieve the set objectives. Furthermore, cross-sectoral issues and sector inter-linkages played an important role in the development of Baltic 21. The Baltic 21 programme was developed on the basis of the work done within the sectors. Each sector was required to report on its progress to the Senior Officials Group (SOG), that guided the work and served as the negotiation forum.

Sector on Forests by Saltsjobaden Declaration was charged to focus on sustainable forestry practices which would contribute to preservation of biodiversity.

In the course of the work, it became clear that emphasis should be placed on all aspects of sustainable forest management. Baltic 21 on Forests aimed at indicating what sustainable development in forestry means in the context of the Baltic Sea region cooperation, and how sustainable forest management could be further promoted within the region. The Baltic 21 action took an advantage of the ongoing work related to the global, European as well as national forestry commitments, international agreements and other international forest activities, and it strove at advancing these international commitments at the level of the Baltic Sea region. Because of the lively international and national forest policy dialogue and developments within various ongoing initiatives and processes on sustainable forest management, the forest sector of Baltic 21 had a wide and solid basis to build on.

Baltic 21 Process in Sector on Forests

The international framework for Baltic 21 on Forests is wide. Many intergovernmental commitments have been made to promote sustainability within the forest sector, such as the decisions made at UNCED (Forest Principles and the Agenda 21, Chapter 11 on Combating deforestation); Intergovernmental Panel on Forest (IPF), Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe and their follow-up meetings (the Pan-European process); Environment for Europe process, as well as the recent collaboration between the two last mentioned in the form of a Work-Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological and Landscape Diver-

sity in the Forest Ecosystems. Furthermore, HELCOM, which is the governing body of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, is now preparing recommendations concerning reduction of nutrients and other pollutants leaching from forestry land.

Legally binding global instruments do not exist that would concern purely or comprehensively forest issues. Discussions on a legally binding instrument for forests will be taken up within the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) that was set up by the decision of UNGASS (June 1997), under the aegis of CSD, to continue the work done in the IPF, inter alia, towards a legally binding agreement. Nevertheless, many of the environmental agreements are relevant to forests. They address forest related issues in a specific context, embodying the concept of sustainability many cross-cutting issues that are relevant to forests, such as biodiversity, climate change, financial resources, technology transfer, trade and environment, and traditional forest related knowledge. The Kyoto protocol can be mentioned as the most recent legally binding global instrument to support sustainable development.

In addition to the existing political commitments and legally binding agreements, there is a range of ongoing activities in the intergovernmental organisations such as FAO, UN/ECE, EU, the Nordic Council of Ministers and others. Furthermore, there is co-operation for instance in forest research, forest statistics and forestry education between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

One of the most relevant international pillars for Baltic 21 on Forests is the Pan-European process on the protection of forests. The first Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe was held in Strasbourg in 1990, and the second in Helsinki in 1993. The third Ministerial Conference will take place in Lisbon on 2-4 June 1998. The Pan-European process follows up and prepares the ministerial conferences, involving nearly 40 signatory states and the European Community that collaborate for the enhancement of sustainable forest management in Europe. The process involves also a number of non-European countries and international governmental and non-governmental organisations as observers.

In the Strasbourg Conference, the European Ministers responsible for forests committed themselves to a progressive implementation of technical and scientific cooperation. The Helsinki Conference advanced the "Forest Principles" of UNCED on the European scale, and it encouraged the consideration of biodiver-

sity as an essential element of sustainable forest management. The Conference set another cornerstone in the long history of the concept of sustainability in forestry in Europe by adopting a new internationally common concept of sustainable forest management. A General Declaration and four Resolutions were signed¹ on the Helsinki Ministerial Conference:

H1 *'General Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe'*

H2 *'General Guidelines for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of European Forests'*

H3 *'Forestry Cooperation with Countries with Economies in Transition'*

H4 *'Strategies for a Process of Long-term Adaptation of Forests in Europe to Climate Change'*

In the follow-up process of the Helsinki Ministerial Conference, special emphasis has been given to the further definition of the essential elements of sustainable forest management and to the elaboration of an instrument for evaluating progress towards it. For this purpose the pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management were developed in 1994.

Among the recent developments, the signatory states of the Helsinki resolutions have adopted (February 1998) a common framework of recommendations "Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management" for voluntary use to further promote sustainability in forestry at the field level in practice.

The broad scope of the Pan-European process including e.g., definition, criteria and indicators, and operational level guidelines for sustainable forest management; biodiversity matters; and cooperation between Countries in Transition; and the active participation of the scientific and other organisations in the process provide a solid basis for Baltic 21 on Forests. Furthermore, two members of Baltic 21, Finland and Poland, are members of the General Coordination Committee (GCC) of the Pan-European process which in fact enables natural and continuous exchange of information between the two processes. Baltic 21 was introduced to the Pan-European process at the meeting of the GCC in Finland in September 1997. The Pan-European process was further informed about the proceedings in Baltic 21 at the expert level meeting in Geneva in February 1998.

¹ All 10 Baltic 21 member countries have signed all these four Resolutions except Sweden for Resolution H4.

Efforts promoting sustainable forest management in the Baltic Sea region cover the whole range of political issues, from updated forest related legislation down to operational level. Most governments in the Baltic Sea region have recently undertaken a revision of forest related legislation or are in a process of doing so. Several important aspects of sustainable forest management are covered by national and/or regional laws and regulations and are already being regularly monitored throughout the region. In many countries national forestry plans or programmes have been or are going to be prepared, and new forest policies formulated. Also informative, descriptive means including various voluntary codes of practices such as guidelines, instructions, recommendations and/or standards for forest management emphasizing environmental and socio-economic aspects have recently been revised or elaborated to better correspond to the modern concept and values of "sustainable forest management".

An international Baltic 21 Forestry Network of forestry and environmental experts, who represent public sector of the member countries and various organisations including environmental NGOs and other interest groups, was set up to participate in the preparation of the forestry programme. In addition, in both lead countries a national group of experts from various interest groups was set up to guide both the national and international preparation of the Baltic 21 on Forests.

The experts from leading partners (Finland and Lithuania) had a preparatory meeting in Helsinki in April 1997, and proposed a list of key areas of interest to be dealt with in the sector report. It was proposed at the same meeting that Baltic 21 on Forests will contain, *inter alia*: a description of forestry in the Baltic Sea region; goals, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management; scenario(s) for sustainable development and policy; the programme for future actions; and the elements to be included for the Baltic 21 final report.

To facilitate the preparation of the sector report, member countries were asked to prepare a country report dealing with the proposed key areas. In these reports, the countries were asked to identify the major challenges of sustainable forest management, and to make proposals for possible projects, studies, pilots, *etc.* that could be incorporated in the Baltic 21 action programme.

The country report had to be brief and concise, but at the same time it had to be problem oriented, i.e. the current gaps and problems in each of the interest areas had to be identified. Possible actions towards sustainability had also be identified, whenever possible. The

identification of gaps and problems and the actions towards sustainability was assumed to help to elaborate the scenario for the forestry sector that will also be included to the sector report.

All the participating countries except Iceland have elaborated Country reports, which are Annexed to the Sector report on Forests. In addition, the NGOs sent their position and contributing papers.

The very first draft of the sector report in September 1997 was produced by Finland and Lithuania. Then it was widely distributed for comments to the each of Baltic country representatives and relevant organizations through the Baltic 21 Forest Network.

A preparatory meeting of the transition countries members of Baltic 21 on Forests was held in Kaunas, Lithuania on October 1-2, 1997. The meeting discussed the objectives and needs of the Baltic 21 process from the point of view of transition countries.

The first international Baltic 21 Forestry Workshop was held in Helsinki, Finland on November 3-4, 1997. The second Workshop was held in Vilnius, Lithuania on January 22-23, 1998.

In the course of the preparation the document has been widely circulated for comments by Forestry Network as well as by SOG. The last version of Sector report on Forests was submitted to SOG Secretariat on 25 February 1998.

Baltic 21 Sector report on Forests

Definition for sustainable forest management as laid down in Resolution H1 the Helsinki Ministerial Conference was assumed to be an overall goal for sustainable forestry development in the Baltic Sea Region by the year 2030:

"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." (Resolution H1)

Six pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management, that contain built-in goals to strive for, can serve as a "sub-goal" for sustainable forest management by the year 2030.

The six pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management are:

1. Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles;

2. Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality;
3. Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood);
4. Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in the forest ecosystems;
5. Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water); and
6. Maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions.

In the national Baltic 21 forestry reports, received from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden, countries described current stage in the development towards sustainability in their forestry sector. In all countries forest related legislation has been amended in the 1990s, in principle to fulfil the requirements for sustainable forest management set *e.g.*, by the Rio (1992) and Helsinki (1993) Conferences. In many countries also a national forestry plan or programme has been prepared, or is under preparation, and a new forest policy formulated. In all countries the leading principle of forest management is sustainability at ecological, economic, social and cultural levels. In general, a political process to enhance sustainable forest management has been adopted by all countries.

Forest ownership structures in the Baltic Sea region countries differ from each other. Assistance and guidance for appropriate forest management and extension for private forest owners are well organized and has long traditions in Nordic Countries and Germany where private forest owners are numerous, and the ownership structure is well established. Private forest owners' associations have been actively involved in the forest related discussion for a long time. Today this is a trend also in the transition countries, where forest ownership structure is changing rapidly. There is a need for services addressed to private forest owners.

Strictly protected forest areas exist in all countries, covering 2.8 – 11 % of the national forest land area. Additionally, on some 10 – 20 % of the total forest area forestry operations are restricted either for conservative, recreational or protective reasons. Identification of special key biotopes is carried out in many countries of the Baltic Sea region. Afforestation of suitable abandoned farmlands is considered as a very important task going on in some countries, in others, however, very little activity exists in that field. Deposition of nitrogen and sulphur is a real threat to forest health and vitality as well as biological diversity

in the whole Baltic Sea drainage basin. Negative effects have already appeared in the southern part of the area.

All the countries have adopted the six pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management, developed within the Helsinki process. Some of the countries have also introduced a set of national indicators. One of the main objectives of the national indicator work should be to develop a suitable way of organizing data and create an extensive documentation system, where different international obligations, national policy objectives, regulative means, existing systems for resource mapping and result assessment among others are integrated. Some difficulties arose in using indicators, especially because they may be considered as a free source of information, while in reality forest related data is often quite expensive to find out. Work on transforming them to management unit level is going on in some countries.

Discussion on the need and importance of forest management certification and labelling of forest products is going on in many countries. Approach to certification ranges widely between the countries and interest groups. Solutions for forest management certification include national standards as well as national non-governmental FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) standards. Certification of some regions based on the general FSC principles and criteria has also taken place. Approaches that comply and could be combined with the International Standardization Organization (ISO) standards and/or EU EMAS (Eco-Management and Auditing Scheme) have also been developed in some of the countries. Furthermore, in some countries marks of origin instead of certification are being developed. Some countries have so far had no chance to initiate the process on a national scale, but may start it in the near future. A brief description of the current situation on forest management certification in the Baltic 21 member countries can be found as Annex 1 in Sector Report on Forests.

During the last few years an interest in renewable energy sources has been growing. Various kinds of programmes, including research and funding, to promote the use of bioenergy have been established in many countries of the Baltic Sea region. Wood based energy mainly comes from forests as felling residues or from timber processing industry as an industrial waste. None of the countries have reported on a short rotation energy crop cultivation. General trend in the region is to increase the use of wood for energy, and to improve methods of environmentally sound utilization. Especially in rural areas, the use of fuelwood still contributes to the

household energy consumption in all the countries.

Based on definition and criteria of sustainable forest management, target situation in 2030 was described. It reflects the expected result if the Baltic Sea Region stays on the path of sustainable development and follows the trend set by above definition and criteria.

The target situation of sustainable forestry in the Baltic Sea Region in 2030 may be depicted as follows:

- All international conventions and agreements related to forestry and forest environment that are relevant to the Baltic Sea region are ratified and implemented without delay in the member countries.

- Collaboration between forestry organizations, environmental and regional planning authorities, private forest owners organizations has been stepped up, as well as dialogue between different interest groups including NGOs and local people.

- Transfer of sustainable forest management know-how at many levels and between various interest groups including forest owners, workers and forestry and environmental organisations has been increased and well structured.

- National criteria and indicators are developed and used in the national policy making, reporting and in the context of national forestry plans and programmes.

- All the participating countries implement international and national agreements to promote forest biodiversity. All levels of biodiversity are adequately covered in forest and related legislation.

- Forestry in practice promotes the conservation of biodiversity and implementation of environmental objectives.

- The network of different types of forest conservation areas corresponds to the domestic and international conservation objectives.

- Forest health, vitality and growth potential are ensured through strengthened sustainable management measures, including satisfactory forest regeneration, and through abatement of air pollution.

- Research cooperation and share of results in the fields of forest ecology, multiple-use of forests and forest management practices is very active and provides a firm basis for sound sustainable forest management decisions.

- Nature conservation and forest research produce versatile and comprehensive information on forest biology, forest biodiversity and its development, and on the impact of forestry measures.

- The use of sustainably produced wood, especially in the energy sector, is significantly increased in each country and in the Baltic Sea Region as a whole.

- Sound economic environment for private forestry, in particular small scale and farm related forestry does exist.

- Local communities have improved opportunities to involve and influence the setting of objectives for forest management within their region.

- Non-timber values have been significantly emphasized in management decisions.

The use of wood resources is based on sustainability and ecological principles in

Each of the fifteen target states according to 2 to 6 corresponds criteria to sustainable forest management and under each criterion from 9 to 12 target states are identified.

Based on above targets and current situation, described in Country reports, a number of gaps between today's situation and the future vision was pointed out:

- Although in most countries of the region forest legislation and policy have recently been revised, *legal and policy frameworks*, as well as *forest management practices* still need to be improved in some parts of the region. Furthermore, control in logging operations need strengthening in some countries.

- *Institutional frameworks* have to be improved in order to ensure appropriate flow of information and cooperation between different target groups and, in particular, between the environment and forestry administrations.

- Because of the fragmented and small private ownership structures that are becoming dominant also in the transition countries there is a need to continuous and updated *extension and training* of foresters, forest workers and owners. Awareness building of the broad public on issues concerning the role of forests and forestry through educational programmes and public relation as well as improving the dialogue between different interest groups is also a challenge.

- *Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management* as a forest policy tool are not used in their full capacity. They should be further developed and integrated into national and / or sub-national policies.

- There is a need for more information on *biodiversity conservation* and effects of forest management and other factors on forest biodiversity.

- Possible gaps of *protection of forests* should be urgently examined.

- *Research* experience between the Baltic Sea region countries should be more actively shared, since the barriers for cooperation of scientists have disappeared due to the recent political changes in the region.

- There is a need to further develop comparable and compatible *forest information and statistics* to respond

to the increasing need for information on resources, policy, industrial and market developments.

- There is a lack of proper incentives to increase the use of domestic renewable energy sources, and thus, to promote the *use of wood energy*.

- *Socio-economic issues* that cover *e.g.*, rural development, sound economic basis for forest owners, non-wood products, employment, cultural and spiritual issues, development of recreational and ecotourism services, and safe working conditions need to be further emphasised in future forest policies and practices.

- Means and ways should be developed to promote the *consumption of sustainably produced wood*, at the same time trying to change consumption patterns into a more sustainable direction.

- Experience on *certification* issues should be shared between countries. Necessity, ways and means to implement certification should be analysed in each country of the Baltic Sea region.

Successful sustainable forest development in the Baltic Sea Region until the year 2030 could be reached with implementation the whole range of measures that could fill existing gaps.

Baltic 21 on Forests action programme presented in Sector report on Forests contains a list of options for actions to be implemented at various levels and by various actors.

Options for action strive for further sustainable forestry development in regional cooperation between the countries at various levels (governmental, regional authorities, advisory and extension organisations, scientific community, forest owners and managers, non-governmental environmental organizations and other interest groups).

The following key areas of interest were identified as a framework for the development of the Baltic 21 Action Programme on Forests. They indicate the areas where most gaps and problems of the sustainable forest development were found.

1. Legal and policy frameworks, and the voluntary means that support sustainable forest management
2. Institutional frameworks
3. Education, extension and training
4. Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management
5. Environmental aspects of sustainable forest management
 - Maintenance and enhancement of biological diversity in sustainable forest management
 - Forest conservation areas
 - Water quality in forests

Prevention of damages to forests (pollution and other)

Forest management and landscape planning

6. Research

7. Forest and environment inventories and statistics

8. Use of wood-based energy

9. Socio-economic and cultural issues

10. Sustainably produced wood and forest products, and sustainable consumption patterns

Under each key area the current situation was described, challenges for the future identified and some options for action are proposed.

Six of the options for actions have been identified as priorities for the regional cooperation within Baltic 21. Their implementation has been elaborated further and these priority actions were proposed to be included in the final Baltic Agenda 21 report.

1. Promotion of sustainable forest management and efficiency in private forestry within the Baltic Sea region through

- a. establishment of organisational structures or networks of forest owners and other forest leading parties;

- b. exchange of information on ways and means of advisory services between organisations and authorities that advise forest owners and managers.

2. A gap analysis on forest conservation areas in the Baltic Sea Region should be conducted. It should include, *inter alia*, amounts and legal status of conservation areas in countries, classifications used in countries (with particular emphasis on applied forest management practices) and an analysis whether and how national classification systems correspond to the existing international terminology and classification systems.

3. Establishment of demonstration areas to illustrate ways and means of forest management practices and planning to promote sustainable forest management.

4. Establishment of a regional group for the exchange of experiences and technological know-how on, and promotion of the use of wood based energy.

5. Promotion of the use of wood, and wood based products, as natural renewable resource and environmentally friendly material, and changing of consumption patterns in a more sustainable direction.

6. Exchange of information and national experiences on Criteria and Indicators for sustainable forest management.

Conclusions

Baltic 21, as mentioned above, has involved the whole range of Forestry Sector representatives and therefore Action Programme for Sustainable Forest Development in the Baltic Sea Region was elaborated as a consequence of this co-operation. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have also actively participated in the process. The Action programme sets the guidelines for successful future co-operation in the region. The implementation of proposed actions could involve various actors ranging from governmental organisations to private individuals.

There was a strong interest shown by International Financial Institutions in the Baltic 21, which have also

expressed commitment to support an implementation phase of the process. Besides IFIs, a great interest was also shown by European Union. HELCOM, VASAB, ICC and UBC have actively participated and supported the Baltic 21 process.

We strongly believe that forestry officials, scientists, NGO's representatives from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will find Baltic 21 process beneficial. We also hope Sector report on Forests will successfully contribute to Sustainable Forest Development in the Baltic Sea Region.

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