

## Official Group Statement MG “Youth” MCPFE-5

*Final version*

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

thank you very much for the opportunity to explain the goals and expectations of the Major Group “Youth”, regarding the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. Youth is currently exclusively represented by the International Forestry Students’ Association

Our vision is to promote Sustainable Forest Management through education. Education in forestry is widely different to what it had been a few decades ago. Considerable changes have taken place in society and these have had a great influence on forestry and forestry education.

We are observing these important processes and providing information to forestry students around the world. We recognise that it can be difficult to communicate the policies of decision makers, who are often lawyers or economists, to local foresters who are primarily responsible for the management of forests. One major factor is that foresters are not aware of the objectives and functions of international or regional forest policy. We are convinced that for the successful implementation of Sustainable Forest Management it is essential to raise the interest and understanding of forestry students in forest policy besides national processes, and thus establish a link between agreements in the framework of the MCPFE and local forest management.

In light of these convictions, the Major Group “Youth” appreciates the commitments of the draft resolutions on Forests and Water as well as those on Forests, Wood and Energy. We are especially gratified to see that the Ministerial Conference acknowledges the significance of training and education in the implementation of these commitments through the framework of Sustainable Forest Management. In order to enhance the awareness, interest and expertise of young professionals in forestry on issues of water management and wood energy the future Warsaw resolutions should also highlight the relevance of higher education in forestry as a key element of a successful implementation of the resolutions.

We ask that the Ministerial Conference continue promoting the participation of young professionals in the framework of this process. Education organisations should be encouraged to motivate students to anticipate and support student initiatives such as conferences and seminars, taking into account issues of water management and wood energy production. Governments should support the maintenance and enlargement of funds for these activities and give easier access to students for activities related to forestry issues. Governments should also provide grant programs for education at national and pan-European levels.

The Major Group “Youth” contributes to these objectives through our willingness to further explain our understandings. We will continue to strengthen the establishment of dialogue between young professionals in forestry and policy makers, as well as communication with stake holders in forestry and representatives of science. In the framework of our Forest Policy Education Network, we spread information on forest policy issues, facilitate student participation in forest policy processes like UNFF, UNFCCC, UNCBD and encourage the initiation of students' projects and scientific events that are related to forest policy at various levels. In Europe alone, students in forestry have successfully organized more than 10 events related to issues of forest policy within the last 3 years.

In closing, we would like to emphasize that education in forestry will be a significant investment in the future development of science and better business insight as well as aiding in the implementation of Sustainable Forest Management around the world.