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New Forest Strategy gives hope for both biodiversity and climate goals

Today, the European Commission has announced its new Forest Strategy until 2030. The strategy is part of the Fit for 55/European Green Deal package published by the Commission on Wednesday of this week. This is a step forward in the EU's approach to forests, which previously, have mainly been seen as a source of raw materials and energy. The new strategy describes the poor ecological state of EU forests. The Greens/EFA Group welcome the announcement of a legally binding instrument for ecosystem restoration, including forest ecosystems, and of a new legislative proposal on EU Forest Observation.

Ville Niinistö MEP, and Greens/EFA coordinator of the Industry, Research and Energy committee member of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, comments:

“We welcome the announcement of a legally binding instrument for ecosystem restoration, including forest ecosystems by the end of 2021. It can help us move towards genuinely more sustainable management of our forests, if properly implemented by Member States, with strong binding targets. The majority of Europe’s forests are managed, and with biodiversity in our forests continuously declining, we must no longer pretend that forest management has been sustainable until now. It is clear that voluntary measures have not worked. The work planned on old-growth forests, closer-to-nature management and biodiversity friendly afforestation and restoration are important and welcomed, but guidelines are insufficient tools. The announcement of a new legislative proposal on EU Forest Observation, with national strategic plans is a very important step, as data on forests are patchy and lack harmonisation. This is an important part of the implementation of our climate and biodiversity goals in forest nature.

“When it comes to the economic role of EU forests, we are delighted to see that finally the important role of non-wood products has been acknowledged, including sustainable eco-tourism. Long-lived wood products are highlighted, but we regret that the Forest Strategy still does not push sufficiently towards cascading use of our valuable forest materials.

“It is clear that excessive wood-based bioenergy is not a sustainable use of valuable forests and even in the short term it should only be based on forest residues. We gladly welcome the new sustainability criteria proposed, but they still need improvements to save our forests. The long term focus on bioenergy should not be biomass from forests, but from residues and wastes from industry.”

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