

ROBIN WOOD protest on the occasion of the "International Conference on Forests for Biodiversity and Climate" in Brussels

Weak "Green Deal": EU must resolutely protect primary and natural forests against multiple threats

Brussels, 4th February 2020 | **SAVE EUROPEAN PRIMARY FORESTS!** – this is the slogan written on a 50 metre banner that activists of the German environmental organisation ROBIN WOOD unrolled in front of the headquarters of the European Commission this morning. Nearby the international conference on forests convened by the European Commission takes place and will be in session until tomorrow. ROBIN WOOD calls for a turn of the EU-politics regarding primary and natural forests. The environmental NGO criticises that the European Commission's strategy on forests held out in prospect in the "Green Deal" focuses too much on economic objectives instead of the resolute protection of primary and natural forests.

Although the strategy on forests contains relevant aspects, like the afforestation of destroyed and degraded forests in Europe, all the proposed measures centre around the economic valorisation of wood. The demand for wood is immense, but the major part of it is not transformed into durable products, but ends up as paper or pressed wood furniture or is increasingly burnt in the form of pellets and firewood.

"The new strategy on forests leads astray if an unconditional protection of the remaining natural and primary forests isn't guaranteed at the same time. Exclusively focusing on increases in biomass can't be called a measure for climate protection. Especially not if the produced wood ends up in short-lived consumption", Jana Ballenthien, ROBIN WOOD specialist on forests, says.

The effects of overexploiting forests as mere deliverers of wood become particularly evident in Romania. The country has irretrievably lost about 100 000 hectares of its primary and natural forests as well as the species living there, within the last 15 years. This also affects Natura 2000 areas, which are protected according to EU-law. Environmental activists are put under severe pressure in Romania; there have even occurred several cases of murder.

"European governments are destroying biodiverse, irreplaceable forests, that can moreover cope a lot better with a changing climate than commercial forests, in

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front of our eyes. This destruction has to be stopped right now!" Ballenthien says. "Giving money to foresters, so that they can afforest commercial forests, is far from being sufficient."

ROBIN WOOD demands quickly cataloguing and resolutely protecting primary and natural forests. Illegal logging has to be prevented, also in Europe. Particularly damages of Natura 2000-areas which are protected according to EU-law, must be strictly pursued by local authorities and must be taken to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Furthermore ROBIN WOOD calls for efficiently managing the resource wood as well as legally binding regulations regarding complete and transparent proofs and certificates of supply chains within the EU. These goals need to find their way into new strategies on forests and biodiversity.

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Further information:

- „International Conference on Forests for Biodiversity and Climate“: https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/international-conference-forests-biodiversity-and-climate_de
- ROBIN WOOD campaign on Romania (in german): <https://www.robinwood.de/rumänische-ur-und-naturwälder-schützen>
- campaign „Save Paradise Forests“: <https://www.saveparadiseforests.eu>

Context:

The European Commission presented a "Green deal" in December 2019, which according to the Commission president Ursula von der Leyen is supposed to achieve no less than "reconciling our economy and our planet". ROBIN WOOD and other NGOs don't really put a lot of hope into the "Green Deal" for bringing about a socio-ecological transformation that is capable of placing environmental protection and nature preservation above economic concerns. This image also applies to the strategy on forests held out in prospect in the "Green Deal": Incentives for foresters, afforestation and restoration are planned. The preservation of primary and natural forests however plays a minor part.