

4 October 2023

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Dear Ursula,

We would like to convey to you our appreciation for the good cooperation that we have had with you on forest-related matters. As you very well know, forests are an issue of great economic, environmental, cultural and social importance for Finland and Sweden, and thus also a topic of considerable political attention in our countries.

We have listened carefully to the State of the European Union–speech from 13th of September and welcome the tribute paid to the forests in Europe, including our Northern coniferous forests. We agree with you that forests are an irreplaceable source of goods and services, absorbing carbon dioxide, supplying wood and other products, generating fertile soils, and filtering air and water. We see that these important functions of forests are best preserved through national practices and know-how.

Our forests, forestry and its value chains face a lot of pressure from newly negotiated EU legislation on energy, climate and environment. We see that it is important now to take some time, focus on implementation and analyze the overall impact that these policies eventually have on forests. We must find ways to support the green transition of the EU in a coherent way, and provide incentives for the adoption of clean and sustainable innovations while respecting nature and protecting it for future generations to enjoy.

As the preparation of the Strategic Agenda of the EU leaders is about to begin, and Europe is heading towards elections, it is even more important to ensure that forests are part of the solution also in the future. During the next legislative period, Europe should be able to provide the best possible framework for societies and businesses to move from a fossil economy to a circular and bioeconomy. This would strengthen our ability to tackle the climate crisis and boost our strategic competitiveness and resilience. Forestry can contribute to diversifying sources of supply and is also an area where Europe can achieve global technology leadership position.

We see that active forestry, as a part of the bioeconomy should be an elementary part of the EU's green transition policy, contributing also to our strategy to improve long term competitiveness. Forestry makes the EU stronger and more resilient. It provides domestic and sustainable raw materials and renewable energy, and is part of a highly innovative industry. Strong demand for sustainable products in combination with development of a wide range of application of wood-based materials creates a vast potential for a highly competitive European industry. EU policy should underpin such development and create an enabling environment for forestry in the EU, aiming at removing all unnecessary market barriers and creating positive incentives. Also here, better regulation is key. The European regulatory framework must be clear, coherent and predictable. To speed up the decarbonisation of European industry, our approach should be technology neutral and excellence-based.

The future of Europe and the well-being of our citizens depend on the success of the green transition. We are committed to finding the best solutions – not only for the next legislative period, but for the decades to come. And we want to work with you to achieve this.

Therefore, we would like to invite you to Sweden or Finland, at your convenience, to further discuss how we best utilize our forests' and forestry's potential for Europe's economic strength, long term competitiveness and green transition.

Petteri Orpo
Prime Minister of Finland

Ulf Kristersson
Prime Minister of Sweden