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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: Informal meeting of Forest Ministers of the „For Forest Group“ (Vienna and Stuhleck, Austria, 25-26 September 2023)
- Information from the Austrian delegation, on behalf of the Austrian, Finnish, Slovenian and Swedish delegations

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Austrian delegation, on behalf of the Austrian, Finnish, Slovenian and Swedish delegations, on the above-mentioned subject which will be dealt with under ‘Any other business’ at the Council meeting (‘Agriculture and Fisheries’) on 20 November 2023.

Informal meeting of Forest Ministers of the „For Forest Group“ (Vienna and Stuhleck, Austria, 25-26 September 2023)

Information from the Austrian delegation, on behalf of the Austrian, Finnish, Slovenian and Swedish delegations

On September 25-26 2023, the *For Forest Group*, comprising the Ministers responsible for forestry of Austria, Finland, Slovenia and Sweden, gathered in Austria for their informal ministerial meeting. The Group was founded in 2022, through the initiative of Ministers of forest rich EU Member States as an informal strategic group, aiming for closer cross-border cooperation in forest related matters, based on sustainable forest management as way forward, including exchange of knowledge and best practices.

At the ministerial meeting in Stuhleck (Austria), which took place on the side-lines of the AUSTROFOMA, Austria’s largest and internationally renowned forestry machinery and trade fair, the *For Forest Group* presented a Joint Statement, titled “Shaping the future of European forests and the forest based sector – leading the way forward.”

In the Joint Statement, the Ministers reaffirmed their guiding principles for forest related matters in the EU. It highlights the key role of sustainable forest management in securing the multiple functions of forests and making them fit for current and future challenges. Moreover, the guiding principle for any action should remain the three dimensions of sustainability – including ecologic, economic and social aspects. The *For Forest Group* also reiterated the importance of bioeconomy, driven by the sustainable use of forest-based products, as a crucial tool in generating income and rural jobs, in supporting the sustainable energy transition as well as in promoting innovation along the wood-based value chain.

