

**STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE AT
27th SESSION OF THE FAO COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY
Agenda Item 8.1 - FAO's work on urban forestry and its contribution to
urban agrifood systems transformation**

The European Forest Institute is grateful to FAO for the honour to participate to the 27th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, referring to item 8.1 on “Urban forestry and its contribution to urban agrifood systems transformation”. The European Forest Institute wishes to **thank also the COFO Members for their interest shown towards EFI's contribution on research and informed policy advocacy on the strategic theme of BioCities.**

The world forest community has a great opportunity to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation, also where most of the world populations live today, in urban and peri-urban areas. Cities showcase some of our greatest challenges—but also offer some of our greatest opportunities for leading the transformation towards a climate-neutral and nature-positive economy. And **trees, forests, and green infrastructures at large, may play a significant role in this endeavour.**

After 200 years of unprecedented urbanisation and economic growth based on a fossil-based economy, we have arrived at a tipping point. Our urbanised world has become too big for our planet. This is clearly exemplified by climate change, biodiversity loss, and the degradation of our natural resources.

We now need a new way of thinking, as a basis for a new economic paradigm for our urbanised world. A paradigm where cities, our economic and innovation hubs, take the lead in rethinking our economy and its relationship to nature to ensure it prospers within the renewable boundaries of our planet. This new paradigm should be based on a synergistic relationship between nature and society, economy and ecology, and rural and urban areas, to develop a circular and equitable bioeconomy centred around life and not consumption.

The book on *Transforming Biocities*, edited by the EFI, includes the work of urban foresters and agri-food specialists, architects and urban planners, medical doctors and social scientists, to give interdisciplinary foundation to the concept of BioCities. **As this study argues, cities need to lead this paradigm change, not only in replacing fossil energy by renewable energy but also by taking the lead in replacing non-renewable materials like plastics, steel, or concrete with renewable biobased materials, and replacing grey infrastructures with green ones, making nature a basic urban infra-structure. Here, trees, forests, and wood have a crucial role to play.** We have also to work on improving the resilience of urban forests and of cities biodiversity by their **enhanced adaptive management and the reduction of hazards caused by environmental disturbances and disservices as fire, tree mortality, and pest vulnerability.**

The BioCities paradigm also highlights why **cities using wood in construction may become carbon capture and storage infrastructures and how urban forests and the strategic placements of trees around buildings decrease the energy consumption in buildings for heating and cooling. But they may also reduce the increasing problem of the urban heat island effect and play a major role in human health and wellbeing.**

To accelerate the transition towards more liveable and greener BioCities, **the European Forest Institute launched its BioCities Facility in Rome, with the support of the Italian Government and in collaboration with international Institutions as FAO, aiming to create an informed dialogue on how trees, forests, and wood can rethink and form the backbone of climate smart cities: the BioCities.** Connecting the dots between different disciplines, sectors, and actors, the Facility generates and communicates scientific knowledge on the potential of the circular bioeconomy concept to rethink urban areas, particularly based on forest-based solutions.

EFI is eager to collaborate and to offer his expertise to support and cooperate with FAO, UN agencies and offices, Member States and other institutions and stakeholders, in a truly interdisciplinary effort while reinforcing the potential for private-public partnership, to promote the role of Forest Based Solutions for the wellbeing of citizens and more liveable and equitable cities in the world.