

# EDITORIAL

## WHAT DOES THE GLASGOW CONFERENCE BRING US?

The major UN climate conference COP26 recently ended with the adoption of the global “Glasgow Climate Pact” agreement. At the same time, all unresolved elements in the mechanisms for the implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change were acknowledged and the transparency of the procedures in its application was agreed upon. As part of the signed Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which has so far been supported by over 140 countries in which more than 90 % of world’s forests are located, the leaders pledged to “halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation” by 2030.

The first objective of the conference was to limit the increase in global average temperature to a level significantly lower than 2 °C above the level in the pre-industrial period, as well as to invest efforts in limiting it to 1.5 °C. The second objective was to adapt to the effects of climate change and align financial flows with climate-resilient development. To this end, it is planned to mobilise 100 billion US dollars by 2025. As a leader in the fight against climate change, the EU has committed itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared to 1990.

The general conclusion is that forests will be vital in achieving the goals of fighting against global warming. According to research by the World Resources Institute (WRI), forests absorb 30 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions. Although the forest is a natural climate buffer in the fight against global warming, the fact is that the world’s forest area continues to decline rapidly.

The Conference was also attended by the Croatian Prime Minister, Mr Andrej Plenković. He announced the cessation of electricity production from coal by 2033 at the latest and an increase in the share of renewable energy sources in overall consumption to more than two thirds. He spoke highly of Croatian forestry and its century-old tradition, which is otherwise rarely heard from our politicians. One of the activities that Croatia is planning in the next period is the planting of one million additional trees per year by 2030. This means an increase in the planting from the current nine million trees to ten million in order to annul the greenhouse gas emissions generated by tourist vehicles arriving in Croatia.

The Prime Minister’s announcement raised a number of questions in the public, such as what the current condition of our forests is, whether they are being rapidly cut down, whether the company Croatian Forests Ltd can meet such an ambitious plan, and others. All these issues once again showed a lack of understanding and ignorance of forests and forestry. First of all, cutting down forests is prohibited in Croatian forestry, except in prescribed cases, as evidenced by the increase in forest areas. The public associate afforestation, that is, planting seedlings, only with forest regeneration. Throughout the century-long tradition of Croatian forestry, forest regeneration has been based on natural regeneration, while bare, unforested and non-forested areas are afforested, including those forest areas affected by fires and other disasters where natural regeneration is not possible or has failed for any other reason. Regrettably, the “Brussels bureaucrats” do not know this either, otherwise they would not, as was the case with ice-break in Croatia in 2014, have recognized and financially valorised only the planting of trees as a recovery measure. Among other things, by doing this we are returning the pioneer species to forest areas improved by climatic species, thus making a “step backwards”.

The next danger lies in limiting felling, (read: managing forests). As much as it makes sense to stop cutting down forests, in Croatia and countries with developed forestry it may have negative consequences. Restricting forestry operations through passive protection of forests, preferring “old forests”, etc. will have a negative effect on their condition and stop the process of their regeneration. It is well known that young forests increment the most and thus absorb the highest amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Another question is how we dispose of the felled wood mass. Are we finalizing it sufficiently, are we cascading wood, are we recycling it, or are we replacing it all with the need for new quantities? Let us also ask ourselves in what way and in what amounts we use wood as the most environmentally friendly energy source. The fact is that we have not yet systematically mastered the extraction of biomass from our forests, while wood pellets, the production of which we have raised to an enviable level thanks to cheap raw material, end up mostly in other countries, reducing their greenhouse gas pollution.

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