



**STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of the
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS 2015
21 MARCH 2015**

More than 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests to meet their basic needs. The biodiversity of these vast biomes span tropical and temperate areas, and provide the foundation for ecosystem services that support poverty eradication, food security, medicines, energy and clean water. Yet, despite progress made, we still continue to lose forests at an alarming rate. In order to reverse this trend, we need to better value the wide range of benefits that forests provide for society at large.

This year, as we celebrate the International Day of Forests under the theme of “Forests and Climate Change,” we need to also look at the crucial and direct contribution of forests and forest biodiversity to the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This is particularly important as we look ahead to the climate change conference taking place in Paris later this year under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

One specific action that can help is for countries to take into account the role of biodiversity in climate change strategies, among them forest ecosystem restoration, within national voluntary reporting. Ecosystem restoration offers the potential to achieve win-win climate and biodiversity goals, if appropriate measures are taken. Accordingly, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is encouraging Parties, through notification 2015-02-12,¹ to make use of existing tools, guidance and information related to biodiversity and climate change.

Efforts to conserve and restore forest ecosystems can profoundly contribute to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as other internationally agreed goals, such as the four Global Objectives on Forests of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, including in particular the proposed Sustainable Development Goal 15, and such initiatives such as the Bonn Challenge of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration.

A central focus of the Convention’s work has been to support countries in developing ecosystem conservation and restoration plans, using an integrated landscape-wide approach to promote policy, planning and economic tools, and monitoring and evaluation systems, to achieve the Strategic Plan for

¹ More information is available at www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2015/ntf-2015-015-cc-en.pdf.



**Convention on
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Biodiversity and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Concerted efforts have helped countries address key challenges, define plans to set national targets and identify the enabling conditions to restore at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems (Aichi Target 15), to restore ecosystems that provide critical services (Aichi Target 14) and to halve the rate of loss of natural habitats, including forests, and, where feasible, bring it close to zero (Aichi Target 5).

To assist countries in achieving these Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Korea Forest Service launched the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (FERI) on 14 October 2014, in the margins of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea. Envisaged to be a six-year initiative, FERI serves as a mechanism for assisting Parties in assessing the potential costs and benefits of restoration. It builds on the Hyderabad Call for a Concerted Effort on Ecosystem Restoration initiated in October 2012 by the Governments of India, the Republic of Korea and South Africa, as well as by the heads of many international conventions and organizations.²

The Republic of Korea is recognized for its impressive large-scale forest ecosystem restoration success. As a first step, the Korean Forest Service has prepared a summary document of the lessons learned from its National Reforestation Programme.³ Our intention is to share this information and other rich experiences at the global level through the FERI. By maximizing restoration efforts through knowledge-sharing and implementation and technical support, FERI will directly assist developing country Parties in operationalizing their national targets and plans for ecosystem conservation and restoration within the framework of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 14 and 15.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed today with the Vice-Minister of the Korea Forest Service consolidates our support to these restoration efforts by Parties. FERI comes at an important time in the evolving global restoration agenda, in particular within global processes, including the post-2015 development agenda and the proposed sustainable development goals. Forests are explicitly included under Goal 15 connected to ecosystems and biodiversity. This reflects the multiple important contributions that forest ecosystems make to sustainable development.

The Republic of Korea knows first-hand how much forests provide for people. Today, on the International Day of Forests, FERI takes another important step. Through this Initiative, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Korea Forest Service hope more people will be able to enjoy and appreciate the benefits derived from forests.

² The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER).

³ This study is available on the Convention's website at www.cbd.int/restoration/country-studies/.