



**STATEMENT BY**

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**on the occasion of the**

**MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE:  
“FOREST-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR ACCELERATING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGS”  
THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF13)**

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*Excellencies, Distinguished Ministers, members of the United Nations Forum on Forests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Our Forests Are Our Life.

Covering 30 per cent of the Earth's land and hosting 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity, our forests play an important role as providers of life. Their existence underpins many aspects of our societies. Forests are often central to many cultures and associated traditional practices. Everywhere in the world, even where no forest is near, they provide a myriad of benefits to human societies; including foods, medicines and other non-timber forest products, as well as crucial ecological functions that could help stabilize climate change and buffer its impacts.

Forests, however, remain undervalued. The trends for deforestation, degradation and fragmentation continue unabated, especially in tropical regions. In addition, forest biodiversity and its many interconnections, including values and the threats it faces, is a topic that does not garner the attention it deserves in the media. The agenda requires new momentum, a narrative that unites and repositions forest biodiversity as a fundamental component of sustainable development.

We have an opportunity to build on a fast-growing body of scientific data, and to test different approaches, models and tools to improve the integrated management of forests. The tools are also in place for accurate, frequent and cost-efficient monitoring on a variety of forest dimensions so that we can report on progress, learn from our mistakes and replicate successful solutions where they happen. The cards are all in our hands to take transformative action and reverse the current trajectory.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In 2016, the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) adopted Decision 13/7, among other, inviting the United Nations Forum on Forests, in developing the Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030, to take into account the forest-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets, with a view to promoting a coordinated approach to the achievement of the forest-related multilateral commitments and goals.

The decision also invited the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in preparing the 2017-2030 work plan of the Partnership, to consider ways and means of further enhancing their individual and collective contributions to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to also support a coordinated approach to the achievement of the forest-related multilateral commitments and goals.

In this regard, I am pleased to note that this has been recognized and factored into the resulting UN Strategic Plan on Forests and in the discussions among the Collaborative Partnership.

With the architecture developed, we now must advance, as there is a sense of urgency to act and move forward. In light of this, I offer three points to mobilize our collective ambition and close the implementation gap to change the trajectory of forest biodiversity loss.

**First, we need a credible, compelling and unified narrative in the lead up to 2030.** Our message needs to be based on credible, science-based evidence conveying the potential of nature-based solutions to meet many of the development challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The goals of conservation and sustainable use of forests, and their biodiversity, offer a space to innovate and invest at the national and sub-national scale, to advance globally agreed goals and targets, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Global Forest Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In fact, for many if not all of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is difficult to imagine how they could be achieved in a scenario where forests and the services they provide continue to decline. The point is therefore to continue to make the case, to build on credible science to generate sound data, and to strengthen our narrative to show that forests and biodiversity play an essential part in the sustainable development agenda.

**Second, we need to engage strategic actors, across government, civil society and the private sector, to make the case for natural capital as a central element of long term sustainability pathways.** Several nature conservation measures include innovative mechanisms to address poverty, mainly in rural areas where 70 per cent of the global poor currently live. In these rural areas, as much as 50 to 90 per cent of livelihoods are sourced from non-market goods and ecosystem services. The rural poor depend directly on forest biodiversity as a source of food, income and insurance against various risks, such as external economic shocks, environmental disasters, impacts of climate change, and food insecurity.

Still, measures like Payments for Ecosystem Services including Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), can generate benefits in the form of community forestry, non-timber forest products, mangrove restoration, jobs in the management of protected areas and ecotourism, agroforestry, grassland management, and conservation of agricultural diversity.

On the climate front, nature-based solutions from forests to mangroves can provide over a third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilize warming to below 2 °C. Nature-based solutions can often be more cost-efficient and sustainable compared to grey infrastructure. The Collaborative Partnership has a critical role to play to identify opportunities to promote such solutions based on nature to meet climate, forest and biodiversity targets and to support efforts to reflect such natural assets in national accounts and development strategies.

**Third, we need to embrace transformational change in the forest biodiversity agenda.** As the Convention on Biological Diversity prepares to shape a new deal for nature after 2020, when the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets will come to an end, we stand ready to work with the UN Forum on Forests, to strengthen collaboration and support countries in developing and implementing their forest policies, in the context of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the other forest-related multilateral commitments and goals.

Within the Convention, Parties will launch an open and inclusive process towards designing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in the forthcoming COP 14 meeting in Egypt this November. Such a framework will eventually be adopted at COP 15 in China, in 2020. In defining the new framework, the Secretariat will ensure that it integrates elements of the existing landscape of global commitments, including the Strategic Plan on Forests, and support its achievement of shared goals for safeguarding and sustainably using forests, and ensuring access and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

To this end, I would like to invite all of you to join us during the High Level Political Forum session in July in New York and to participate in a number of events that the Secretariat is organizing, together with partner organizations, many of which as part of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

Together we can uphold these ideas and ensure that forests are seen as the pillar that they truly are for human development and the diversity of life on Earth.

Thank you for your attention.