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on the occasion of

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2021

“Reimagine. Recreate. Restore.”

Ecosystem services are indispensable to the wellbeing of all the world’s people. Yet, as we celebrate World Environment Day 2021, and the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, ecosystems continue to erode.

The negative trends of land degradation continue to reach unacceptably high levels in many parts of the world. Between 1997 and 2011, land-use change caused losses averaging \$20 trillion worth of ecosystem services every year. Land degradation alone accounted for 30 per cent of this figure; that is three times the global market value of agricultural products¹.

Ecosystem degradation already affects the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people, and costs more than 10 per cent of the annual global gross product in loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services².

The socio-economic imbalances created during the COVID-19 crisis have further worsened the situation of millions of people dependent on these precious land and natural resources for food and livelihood security.

Fortunately, it is possible to reverse this trend. Investing in land and ecosystem restoration makes ecological, social and economic sense. Restoring 15 per cent of converted lands in the right places could prevent 60 per cent of projected species extinctions. Restoration through agroforestry alone has the potential to increase food security for 1.3 billion people. And, restoring coral reefs in Mesoamerica and Indonesia could deliver an additional \$2.5 billion in ecosystem service benefits per year.

Importantly, ecosystem restoration, when implemented effectively and with the support of local populations, works. Research shows that for every dollar spent on restoration, between \$3 and \$75 of economic benefits from ecosystem goods and services can be expected³.

With the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration laying the foundation, this must be the decade of action and transformation.

The transitions needed for ecosystem restoration require building technical capacity, strengthening regional, national and subnational policy governance and institutional mechanisms, investing in research, building synergies in cross-sectoral policies, setting the right incentives, catalysing action on the ground, unlocking and reorienting finance, ensuring accountability and, finally, empowering a global movement.

¹ UNCCD. 2021. Restored Land, Healthy People, Green Recovery Build Forward Better with Land-Centered Solutions.

² www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/spm_3bi_ldr_digital.pdf

³ www.decadeonrestoration.org/strategy

The Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative, implemented by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and supported by the Korea Forest Service, aims to support countries' capacity for planning and implementing ecosystem restoration as part of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans. This initiative sets a strong example for mobilising knowledge resources and enhancing capacities for advancing the restoration agenda.

Ecosystem restoration is also expected to feature prominently in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted later this year in Kunming, China.

Let's make use of this opportunity and dedicate our efforts towards ecosystem restoration, an essential element of restoring balance with nature.
