



Message from His Excellency Ambassador Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob

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Celebration of the 2018 International Day of Forests

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It is difficult to picture a world without forests – they are essential to our well-being, sustainable development and life on this planet.

1.6 billion people depend on forests for subsistence, livelihood, employment and income generation. These vital ecosystems support the global environment – from climate change mitigation and adaptation to regulating hydrological systems. Sustainable forest management and sustainable use of forest products offers some of the most effective and cost-competitive natural carbon capture and storage options available.

We rely on forests to generate energy, for materials to build our homes, and for a wide range of essential non-wood products from medicines to food which are vital for our health.

Forests directly affect the livelihoods of 20 percent of the world's people. Energy from wood is the one of the most important source of renewable energy, representing 9 percent of the total primary energy supply worldwide. Maintaining sustainable and healthy forests is thus without a doubt, one of the greatest challenges for our current generation.

And yet, despite their critical and well recognised importance in all our daily lives, we continue to lose and degrade vast areas of natural forests in many parts of the world. Today, 7 million hectares of forests continue to be lost every year in tropical countries.

The main drivers of deforestation are largely due to the growing scale of human activities, unsustainable use and land management practices, driven by the ever-increasing demand for food and energy products, amongst others.

With the world's population projected to reach 9.8 billion by 2050 and the proportion of the urban population is projected to reach 60 per cent in 2030, it is reasonable to expect that the global demand forest products and services will only continue to increase, thus adding further pressure on the forests we have today.

Member States of the United Nations recognized the importance of forests when they placed forests prominently within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The adoption of the first ever United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 last year, is further indication of the global recognition of the importance of forests for our future.



The Strategic plan and its six Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets provide a global framework for sustainably managing all types of forests and trees outside forests, halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, and increasing the forest area.

The Strategic plan also provides a road map to guide forest-related contributions to the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, among other international commitments and goals related to forests.

The theme of this year's International Day of Forests is "Forests and Sustainable Cities", to highlight the many reasons why forests are an essential part of the solution to achieving the 2030 agenda, and in our efforts to end poverty, promote prosperity and people's well-being while safeguarding our natural environment.

If we wish to achieve the global sustainable development through a people-centred "no one left behind" approach – we will need broad-based partnerships with governments, the private sector and civil society to sustainably manage our forests and make progress to achieve our vision for a greener future.

I hope that today's observance of the International Day of Forests will serve as a valuable reminder of how much we depend on forests, and provide an opportunity to celebrate the hard work of foresters, local governments, and communities that work every day as the conscientious stewards of these valuable ecosystems.
