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**MESSAGE FROM DR. MANOEL SOBRAL FILHO  
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**Celebration of the 2018 International Day of Forests  
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Throughout history, the rise and fall of human civilization has been linked to the sustainability of the environmental resources which we depend on. There are many examples of ancient societies which inadvertently undermined their future through deforestation and habitat destruction, mismanagement of soil and water, overhunting, overfishing, and population growth.

Today, for the first time in our history, more than half of the world's population lives in towns and cities. By 2050, two-thirds of our world's population will live in cities, creating an unprecedented demand for water, food and energy. How we manage forests will determine how we meet this demand.

Forests and trees impact the daily lives of people everywhere, and for this reason the theme of the 2018 International Day of Forests is "Forests and Sustainable Cities."

Forests are nature's water towers, they filter, store and supply freshwater, and through transpiration they seed clouds and affect rainfall patterns. Forested watersheds and wetlands supply 75% of the world's freshwater for our use – be it households, water for agriculture or industrial use.

Forests contribute to increased rainfall and help control erosion and flooding. A recent study on climate impacts of tropical forest loss found that deforestation in South America, South Asia and Africa could cause warming and altered rainfall patterns and alter crops growing conditions in the tropics and beyond; as far as the US Midwest, Europe and China.

Increased rainfall variability is already responsible for loss of food production every year—estimated to be enough to feed 81 million people every day. At the same time, it is estimated that 75% of forest loss and degradation across the world is attributable to deforestation for agricultural expansion.

Per FAO figures, by 2050 global agriculture production will increase by 60%, and meat production by 76%. Meeting this global demand for food, without impacting forests and taking environmental risks poses a significant challenge.



Today, some 40% of population in less developed countries, an over 2 billion people still rely on wood fuel for cooking and heating. Nearly 90 per cent of all fuelwood and charcoal use takes place in developing countries, where forests are often the only energy source available to the poor. At the same time, urban forests, parks and trees in cities can provide significant savings on reducing energy use for heating and cooling homes and buildings.

In the past two years, we have seen a groundswell of support for forests. Starting with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs in 2015, and culminating in the adoption of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 by the UN General Assembly last year.

The UN Strategic Plan for Forests, envisions a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, and sets forth 6 Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets to be achieved by 2030. The Global Goals and targets cover combating climate change, increasing forest protected areas, mobilizing financing and inspiring innovation, promoting governance, and enhancing cooperation across sectors and stakeholders.

10,000 years ago, at the end of the last great ice age, 6 billion hectares of forests covered 45 percent of the Earth's land. Over the last 5,000 years, 1.8 billion hectares were lost, and most of this loss (1.4 billion hectares) happened in the last 300 years.

Today, forests cover about one third of the earth's land. The UN Strategic Plan for Forests aims to increase the amount of forests we have, through its groundbreaking target to increase forest area globally by 3% or 120 million hectares by 2030.

As we look to the future, it is inevitable that growth and shifts in population, changes in climate, and innovation in knowledge and technology will impact our future forests. One thing I am certain of, investing in forests is essential for securing a sustainable future for communities the world over.

On this International Day of Forests, I hope that people around the world will join in sending a message of hope and optimism for the world's forests.

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