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MESSAGE

Forests and Biodiversity

2020 celebration of the International Day of Forests

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Forests are among the world's most productive land-based ecosystems and are essential to life on Earth. This is the first sentence of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030, and an important reminder as we celebrate the world's forests.

The UN Forum on Forests was established in 2000 to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, and to strengthen long-term political commitment for this purpose. The Forum has been instrumental in creating a global framework for forest policy development, coordination and implementation.

Forests are a critical part of nature-based solutions for many of the global challenges that we face. From poverty eradication, lack of food and nutrition and water scarcity to combatting climate change and biodiversity loss. The focus on biodiversity as the theme of this year's International Day is particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing deliberations at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which will meet at the end of 2020.

Forests are not just trees. The existence and well-being of people are deeply dependent on the diversity of, and within, plant, animal and other species that constitute a living breathing forest. A forest that lasts is one that can provide a plethora of benefits to society.

In a world that has been indelibly shaped by human activity, sustainably managing forests is not something that can be taken for granted. We have to include those who live in and with forests. The forest caretakers who protect forests. They have a significant role to play. They are forest owners, managers, and local and indigenous communities. It is estimated that 1.5 billion local and indigenous people have secured the rights to manage their forests through community-based tenure.

The International Day of Forests provides us with not just an opportunity to celebrate the multi-faceted values and benefits of forests and sustainable forest management, including their key contribution to biodiversity; it also provides us with an opportunity to raise questions. How can we as the stewards of forests work to strengthen the interaction between forest managers and the rest of the society demanding better protection of biodiversity?

How can we strengthen the dialogue between foresters and conservationists? How can we do more to build a global partnership and action to achieve our common fundamental goal – halting the loss of biodiversity in the world?

Creating a sustainable future for the current and next generations is a shared hope and a shared responsibility. On this International Day of Forests, I hope that we will inspire more people to join us in the global effort to create lasting change – so that in the future we not only sustain the forests and biodiversity we have but also increase the diversity of life on this planet we share.
