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**MESSAGE**

**Forests and Biodiversity  
2020 celebration of the International Day of Forests**

**21 March 2020**

Every year on 21 March, we celebrate the International Day of Forests to raise awareness of the role of forests and trees in sustaining life on earth.

Over 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests for goods and services including timber, food, fuel, jobs and shelter. Forests provide critical ecosystem services that affect global climate, rainfall patterns and watersheds. Eighty per cent of all land-based biodiversity is found in forests. It is estimated that the economic value of ecosystem services provided by forests could be as much as US\$16.2 trillion annually.

This year's theme is "Forests and Biodiversity", which is particularly timely and relevant. We are at a point in human history when global biodiversity is declining at unprecedented levels, despite the dedicated efforts of countries to stop this trend. 2020 has been labeled the biodiversity "super year" culminating with the launch of a new global framework at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Kunming, People's Republic of China later this year.

The future of forests, biodiversity and climate are interlinked. If we continue with business as usual, the future does not look promising. Urgent and concerted action is needed to address these challenges and to put us on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is why the Secretary-General launched the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030.

Implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 will reverse forest loss, increase the world's forest area by three per cent, and eradicate extreme poverty for forest-dependent people.

Earlier this year, the World Economic Forum launched a global initiative to grow, restore and conserve a trillion trees. Last year, the Climate Action Summit and SDG Summit recognized the importance of forests in nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change, and for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 15 of life on land.

We have already identified the solutions. All that is needed is for us to act now, as one global community. On this International Day of Forests, I urge governments, businesses, and all members of civil society to take action to safeguard the world's forests and the biodiversity that lives within them.

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