

**Remarks by the President of the UN General Assembly,
H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang
at the opening of the 20th session of the
United Nations Forum on Forests
Monday, 5 May 2025
[As Delivered]**

I am honoured to join you for the opening of the 20th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

For over two decades, this Forum has brought Member States and stakeholders together to advance the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests.

And the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and the Forest Instrument, among others, have proven useful tools in strengthening forest governance, improving institutional frameworks, and promoting inclusive engagement and partnerships.

With only five years remaining to meet the deadlines for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must take urgent action to achieve our forest goals.

Goals that are predicated on the reality that:

One: Forests are integral to our pursuit of sustainable development.

Two: As some of the planet's most important warehouses of carbon, they are vital to stabilising our climate and addressing climate change.

Three: They support food security, biodiversity, clean air and water, and human well-being.

And Four: Managed sustainably, they help lift people out of poverty, create jobs, and build resilience.

Despite the clear benefits, deforestation, forest degradation, and biodiversity loss are undermining our best efforts.

Every hectare lost moves us away from the sustainable future we seek.

Therefore, I am pleased that the General Assembly recently adopted the resolution on United Nations Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation in line with Sustainable Forest Management.

This resolution is an important step towards the stronger coordination, enhanced financing, and accelerated implementation we need to achieve our goals on forest.

But our efforts will only succeed through renewed multilateral engagement—built on a sense of trust and collective responsibility.

The Pact for the Future, adopted last September, underscores the need for greater efforts to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

Today, the responsibility to implement the Pact for the Future lies with us all.

It is fitting that, later this year, the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be hosted in the Amazon.

This unique backdrop offers a poignant reminder of forests' vital role in the global response to climate change.

We must seize this and other opportunities to reaffirm the importance of forests as pillars of our sustainable development agenda.

Dear Friends,

The challenges before us are indeed immense.

The challenges are tremendous.

But with unity of purpose and clarity of vision, we can ensure that sustainably managed forests remain a cornerstone of a healthier planet and a better future for all.

Thank you.