



# XV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Building a Green, Healthy and Resilient Future with Forests

2–6 May 2022 | Coex, Seoul, Republic of Korea

## Action Points from the main sessions

### Opening ceremony and High-level Dialogue

- In view of the pressing global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity and continuing deforestation and forest degradation we have no time to lose – we need to act now and we can do it!
- Three mutually reinforcing pathways can lead us to a greener, healthier, more resilient future with forests: halting deforestation and maintaining forest ecosystem benefits; restoring and enhancing productive capacity and resilience of forests; and enhancing sustainable forest use and building green value chains.
- To make this happen, we need to invest in our natural capital, our forests. Investment in forests from public and private sources must be increased significantly. To achieve scale we need to catalyze larger financial flows through integrated planning, financial, policy and institutional innovation and by strengthening domestic financial institutions.
- We need to better use scientific and traditional knowledge, and learn from experience and best practices through partnerships and cooperation. The successful example of the Republic of Korea demonstrates that large-scale forest restoration is possible if there is political will and resources are made available. Healthy and thriving forests means healthy and thriving societies – more resilient, inclusive and sustainable.
- Indigenous peoples have been managing their forests sustainably for hundreds of years. Their rights must be recognized and their voices heard. We should also listen to the voice of youth – their future is at stake and they are willing to take action.
- We must reach out to the sectors driving deforestation and degradation to achieve more effective dialogue across sectors and influence decisions. Forests should be integrated in all development strategies that have an impact on the use of land and natural resources. The private sector can lead the way through innovation and green investment.

## 1. Plenaries

### Plenary 1. UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration – eight more years to heal the planet

- The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is an ambitious initiative and a global movement to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide. The Decade provides an opportunity to scale up nature-based solutions by sharing lessons learned and promoting best practices to maximize climate, biodiversity and development benefits from forests.
- Ecosystem restoration is much more than planting trees. It can be a means for eradicating poverty and hunger, improving livelihoods, increasing productivity and recovering ecosystem functions. The potential to restore ecosystems should not be used as an excuse to degrade them. It is far better and more cost-effective to avoid degradation than to destroy and then restore.
- A great deal of knowledge, wisdom and approaches on ecosystem restoration already exists in communities. Effective ecosystem restoration must combine science and local knowledge, including traditional knowledge.
- Government should not simply transfer the responsibility for restoration to local people – it has the responsibility to lead in restoration by providing an enabling environment, empowering local people and supporting them with incentives.
- Forest and landscape restoration is the only solution (for now) for carbon removals at scale and an achievable cost. However, ecosystem restoration for carbon lacks two things – an attractive price, and certainty about demand. Currently, generating high-quality carbon credits through ecosystem restoration costs USD 60–80 per tonne, but the price obtainable is only USD 5–10 per tonne. Until we bridge this difference in funding, it will be difficult to achieve the Bonn Challenge target of restoring 350 million ha by 2030 and even harder to restore the more than 1 billion ha that countries have pledged in total as part of their commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Rio Conventions. Fundamental systemic change is needed to achieve restoration at scale in the timeframe required, and it must be bottom-up.
- Significant methodological progress has been made in restoration monitoring. A harmonized monitoring and reporting framework is needed urgently to measure progress towards agreed commitments.

## Plenary 2. Forests for a healthy, prosperous and peaceful world

- The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of forests and trees for human health and well-being, especially in urban areas. Urban forests and other green areas should become an integral part of all urban planning because they buffer noise, provide cleaner air, reduce the urban heat-island effect and provide green space for exercise and recreation.
- Forests can help people recover from the stress and depression caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and “build back better”. A conscious effort is needed to establish synergetic relationships between people, forest ecosystems and human health and to adopt a “One Health” approach.
- In addition to the many goods and services they provide, forests serve as vital safety nets during disasters and conflicts. They are important for livelihoods and income generation in post-conflict areas and during peace-building. We must maintain healthy and productive forests and ensure secure access and tenure rights for Indigenous Peoples and others who depend on forests directly for their livelihoods.
- Youth are at the forefront of recognizing the human right to a healthy environment. They are ready to care for forests, and they are creating solutions to achieve a sustainable world by mobilizing others, and through advocacy and networking. To scale up youth support for forests and catalyse more action, youth need capacity development and more resources, open access to information, and platforms for engaging and networking.
- Local communities, Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent people have strong ties with forests, which are key components of their livelihoods, health, well-being and culture. Their traditional knowledge and best practices should be taken into consideration in forest restoration efforts and forest management.



### Plenary 3. Wood – the most ancient raw material taking us to the future

- In view of rapid urbanization and the need to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, we need to rethink our cities. The cities of the future should be better integrated with nature. Architects should turn to sustainable wood - preferably produced locally - and other renewable materials and adapt designs accordingly to create more eco-friendly buildings. To facilitate this process, policies and building regulations are needed that allow and promote sustainable buildings with low carbon footprints.
- An overall shift towards building construction with wood and other renewable materials provides an excellent opportunity for forest-rich countries to use the wood they produce to develop sustainable, eco-friendly housing, especially in cities. However, in many developing countries, doing so presents huge challenges and they need technical support and investment for establishing processing industries and building their capacity to produce the modern timber products required for such construction.
- Anything made from petroleum today can be made from a tree tomorrow. Scientific research, development and innovation are needed to support the transition to a circular bioeconomy through the development of new wood-based materials, product manufacturing methods and services. There is also a need to improve resource efficiency and the recyclability of many existing wood-based products to move towards a truly sustainable and circular bioeconomy.
- Scaling up the use of wood-based products will require increasing the global supply of sustainably produced wood through the restoration, reforestation and afforestation of degraded lands, as well as the expansion of agroforestry.
- Smallholders, forest communities and small and medium-sized enterprises produce significant amounts of timber. To achieve greater economic resilience at the local level there is a need to strengthen the capacity of these actors to participate in sustainable wood value chains, including certification.
- Many people associate wood harvesting with deforestation. We need to join efforts to raise global awareness of wood as a nature-based solution, change the public image of wood value chains, convince consumers that “wood is good”, and spread the message that the use of sustainably produced wood contributes to carbon storage, forest conservation and resilience.
- Immediate action is needed to change mind-sets in favour of sustainable wood as a replacement for fossil- and mineral-based materials. The concept of a global communication campaign presented at the Congress, “Grow the Solution. Sustainable Wood”, should be embraced by governments, civil society and the private sector because it offers a clear avenue for achieving a sustainable wood revolution towards climate neutrality and resilience.

## 2. Sub-themes

### Sub-theme 1. Turning the tide – Reversing deforestation and forest degradation

- 2022 is a crucial year for accelerating delivery on commitments on forests and collectively reducing deforestation and forest degradation. Coalitions and strengthened national and international commitments, such as the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use and the Paris Agreement on climate change, present opportunities to turn the tide on deforestation while combating planetary emergencies related to climate change, biodiversity loss, inequality and human health. It is time to pass from an era of negotiation and commitments to a decade of ambitious action and finance at scale.
- Halting deforestation requires robust and comprehensive information on the dynamics that condition and drive the use of forests and land. Deforestation dynamics data can have strong impacts on policymaking. Beyond technical aspects, clear institutional arrangements are critical to ensure accessibility and use of data (open data policy). Stakeholder rights and capacities to generate, access and use data – including socio-economic data explaining underlying drivers – must be strengthened.
- The transformation of agrifood systems is a game-changer for turning the tide on deforestation. Achieving this transformation requires coherence across environmental and economic policies and greater stakeholder cooperation.
- A number of countries, companies and institutions are defining and implementing voluntary and regulatory approaches to ensure that agricultural value chains do not lead to deforestation. Demand-side and supply-side measures linked to agricultural production, trade and consumption can accelerate systemic change.
- Partnership and trust are paramount factors of success. Efforts to reverse deforestation and forest degradation – including when driven by new markets – must benefit and engage smallholders, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with clear and full recognition of their rights.
- Genuine engagement of civil society and the private sector is essential for robust and inclusive verification and certification systems for legal and sustainable forest-sector value chains. Lessons from experiences with verification and certification in forestry should be shared with other land-use sectors.
- Carbon finance has significant potential to increase funding for reducing deforestation and forest degradation, with the demand for carbon offsets surging rapidly to meet the Paris Agreement targets, stimulated by the recent approval (at the 26th Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention) of the Agreement's Article 6. Companies should be encouraged to invest in high-quality emission reductions.

- Thanks to REDD+ processes, many countries have developed strategies and action plans to reduce deforestation in the context of climate and development commitments, strengthened capacities, and boosted stakeholder engagement and participation to ensure carbon as well as socio-environmental benefits. Results-based finance such as carbon markets and REDD+ funding can boost and serve as complementary financing for such actions.
- Pledges must be turned into real financial flows, rewarding national efforts to enhance policy coherence and effective public expenditure and government action backed by private-sector investment. Governments need to maintain a strong role in creating enabling environments and catalysing private investment.



## Sub-theme 2. Nature-based solutions for climate-change adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity conservation

- Nature-based solutions, including sustainable forest management, forest restoration, and halting deforestation, can provide up to one-third of cost-effective mitigation by 2030, have crucial roles in local climate regulation and the provision of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, and will enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of people and forests. They warrant much greater emphasis in measures to address the planet’s multiple and interlinked crises.
- Nature-based solutions should use the best scientific and traditional knowledge and be developed with the full engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. There is a need for genuine partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who use nature-based solutions on a daily basis.
- Incentivizing private-sector investors to scale up investments in forest nature-based solutions requires regulatory frameworks to give commercial value to forests and encourage companies to engage.
- Forest communities, who are often financially and asset poor, must be the centre of attention in efforts to implement nature-based solutions on the ground, and they must obtain real benefits. Financial commitments at the international scale must reach such actors.
- Forest solutions, notably halting deforestation, restoring forests, and sustainable forest management, must be part of the mix for scaling up ambitions to achieve the Paris Agreement, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030, and land degradation neutrality targets.
- The opportunity presented by these global commitments should be used to:
  - enhance the role of forests and trees in Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement and National Adaptation Plans;
  - mobilize financial resources for large-scale ecosystem restoration initiatives that are technically solid, including to ensure that the right tree species are selected for the right places;
  - build capacity for the effective and cost-efficient implementation and monitoring of resilient, multipurpose forest management and ecosystem restoration;
  - empower rural women, men and youth, local communities and Indigenous Peoples to strengthen their forest governance and management capacity and to create on-the-ground solutions; and
  - accelerate the implementation of sustainable forest management and ecosystem restoration at scale.
- Restoration and other nature-based solutions require “champions” in communities – those people who can create success stories, inspire others and become leaders. They also require

strong community engagement, long-term government commitment, strong institutions, and partnerships and shared responsibility among stakeholders.

- Restoration will be more successful when it shifts its focus away from “number of trees in the ground” towards restoration as a means for improving local livelihoods, including food and wood security, disaster risk reduction and resilience, and addressing social issues, and it requires much greater flexibility in thinking and approaches.



### Sub-theme 3. The green pathway to growth and sustainability

- Forests have a role to play in achieving all the SDGs, but it will not happen by itself. It requires cross-sectoral collaboration, promoting a landscape approach, the adoption of new technologies, the quantification, monitoring and reporting of forest socio-economic contributions, including forest ecosystem services, and adequate financial mechanisms.
- Decent and productive work is key to ensuring a sustainable forest sector, and a circular, bio-based economy will provide new opportunities for green jobs. To turn such opportunities into reality, coherent and effective laws, regulations and policies aligned with international labour standards must be implemented.
- More efforts are needed to promote formal employment in the forest sector, including for women and young people, by:
  - collecting and making available more reliable and comparable data on employment in the forest sector for enabling evidence-based policymaking;
  - finding sustainable solutions for improving the sector's performance and conditions of work through social dialogue at different levels as key means for promoting decent work;
  - supporting the private forest sector to promote and establish decent work opportunities, including green jobs in both traditional and emerging forest-related activities; and
  - strengthening capacities at all levels to develop high-quality skills and safe workplaces.
- The development of bioeconomies represents a huge opportunity for the forest sector, and exciting new wood-based products are emerging. Many companies are rethinking their approach to innovation and collaboration to embrace this opportunity. The sustainable development of bioeconomies requires adequate financial mechanisms for innovation in the production and manufacture of forest products, enabling policy frameworks addressing social needs, and innovation in data collection, interpretation and utilization.
- Small and medium-sized forest-based enterprises face challenges in accessing finance due to issues of scale, banking literacy and a lack of prerequisites such as collaterals for loans. Bankable projects of smallholders often require technical assistance and patient capital, access to markets, innovative solutions for collateralizing loans, and new technologies to reduce production-related, organizational and business costs. The role of financial intermediation by local finance institutions, cooperatives and producer organizations and associations should be supported and strengthened to build bridges between individual small farmers and financing institutions.
- Good governance and the protection of local rights (including tenure rights) are prerequisites for effective and successful local investment by smallholders and must be ensured.

- Blended finance has great potential to provide more funding for sustainable forest and landscape management from both public and private sources by pooling resources from multiple bodies to deliver cross-sectoral benefits. Innovative resource mobilization mechanisms include green bonds, crowdfunding, innovation hubs, and collaboration with insurance companies. Attracting institutional investors requires mechanisms to reduce country and currency risk; favourable land-tenure arrangements; adequate forestry information; and support for supply-chain investments to ensure that trees can be harvested, transported and processed.



## Sub-theme 4. Forests and human health – revisiting the connections

- Sustainably managed forests offer multiple physical, psychological and spiritual health benefits. They also contribute to the supply of medicines, food security, boosting the resilience of food systems, and inclusive rural development. With forests under threat, there is a clear need to increase appreciation among the public and policymakers of these benefits.
- Forests can support people’s health in multiple ways, but they may also pose risks related to safety and security. Attention is needed to ensure safe working and living conditions for people in forests.
- Evidence worldwide shows that forest/nature-based health practices such as forest medicine, forest bathing and forest therapy and healing yield enormous health benefits for societies. There is a need to promote such practices through collaboration and policy integration across the health and forest sectors; the sharing of data, knowledge and information; and capacity development.
- Tree cover should be expanded in densely populated areas to increase the healing and other health benefits of trees and forests for urban dwellers.
- The tenure and use rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in forestlands should be legally guaranteed to improve their livelihoods, health and well-being and protect the forests.
- Governments, forest and farm producer organizations and community-based associations should encourage the participation of marginalized rural groups such as women, youth and Indigenous Peoples in forest-based enterprises and in decision-making processes regarding forests and land management.
- Initiatives such as forest and landscape restoration and establishing forest peace parks in internal or cross-border conflict areas warrant exploration as means for assisting peace and reconciliation processes.
- In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need to promote holistic and integrated policies and programmes for human and animal health via a One Health approach. Knowledge should be shared among countries and communities on forest products and services that enhance or have the potential to enhance public health.

## Sub-theme 5. Managing and communicating forest information, data and knowledge

- Knowledge and information on forests are needed for effective climate action and to halt deforestation and restore forest ecosystems. Increasing the transparency of forest data collection, analysis and dissemination is essential for building trust in the data and a fundamental requirement of the Paris Agreement and many performance-based payment schemes.
- A large number of countries and users benefit from free access to very-high-resolution optical, lidar and radar data. The continued provision of these datasets as global public goods should be encouraged.
- Field-based assessments are necessary because they produce detailed data on species, quality and other biophysical attributes and provide validation data for remote-sensing-based models and products. The collection of biophysical and socio-economic data in the field needs continued support.
- Data combined with appropriate computing infrastructure and provided as a global public good allows the widest possible audience to be reached and offers new insights into deforestation and its drivers as well as measures of forest degradation. Such work is vital for efficient forest mapping and monitoring, including for understanding the global carbon cycle, and should be continued and expanded.
- Effective forest monitoring requires innovative and accessible technologies at all levels. Forest monitoring and research programmes should be developed and implemented inclusively to meet the data and information requirements of policymakers and assist the development of coherent forest and land use policies.
- The launch of the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM) represents significant methodological progress in restoration monitoring towards a harmonized monitoring and reporting framework. The capacity of countries and restoration stakeholders needs strengthening to ensure the transparent monitoring and reporting of progress towards agreed commitments.
- There is a need to demonstrate to policymakers the value of forest assessments, including field-based components, to ensure their continued political and financial support.
- A new narrative on forests and increased capacity development for forest communicators are needed to strengthen understanding and awareness of the benefits of sustainably managed forests and trees among decision-makers and the public and to influence global dialogues.
- Forest education requires strengthening at all levels, from early childhood to university curricula, to sensitize increasingly urbanized populations on the importance of forests and the use of sustainably produced wood and to attract new generations of foresters equipped to address diverse forest-related challenges.

## Sub-theme 6. Forests without boundaries – enhancing management and cooperation

- Forests are part of the solution to today's big challenges. To maximize the benefits forests provide to people and the planet, they must be considered as an integral part of mosaics of land cover, land use and agrifood systems.
- Administrative boundaries and silos must be overcome and multisectoral institutional mechanisms established or strengthened at the local and national levels.
- A broad and integrated landscape-scale management framework is required to address forests, water, biodiversity, agriculture, energy and the interests and concerns of forest-dependent people, particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities as well as urban populations and other stakeholders.
- The full range of contributions that forests make to ecosystem services and agrifood systems beyond wood, carbon and water should be considered in land use policies. The social and cultural values of forests are equally important.
- As society evolves, the forest sector and the scope of forestry itself must adapt. This requires a change in the way of thinking, balancing economic considerations with social and environmental ones.
- Forestry is a key sector for green jobs and must be sustainable, with sustainable growth, income, revenue and investments.
- The active participation of all stakeholders is an essential element of the sustainable management of forests and other natural resources. To obtain this, coordination, collaboration and partnerships among sectors and stakeholders and the creation of an enabling environment are required. Collaboration and partnerships should be transparent, accountable and built on trust.
- Civil-society organizations can and should play crucial roles as brokers of trust, bringing together governments, the private sector and Indigenous Peoples and local communities to creating better understanding and an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Indigenous Peoples are not stakeholders, but rights holders!
- We need to enhance intergenerational cooperation to attain our common goals for forests. The participation of young people – the decision-makers of the future – is essential.



### 3. Special events

#### Ministerial Forum on Forest Finance

- A huge funding gap exists between what is needed to implement global commitments on forests and what is available – public and private investment must both scale up.
- Innovative and sustainable financing options exist but there is a shortage of bankable projects. Some countries are making progress, but more effort is needed to increase access to global climate- and environment-based funds for those countries most in need.
- There is a need to change the way public money is spent to support forests as public goods, adjusting rules across sectors and markets to ensure they take nature into account. Policies must change to divert financial flows away from actions that harm forests and to incentivize investment in conservation, restoration and sustainable use.
- There is also a need to advance on multiple fronts, from the broader use of financial instruments to building robust portfolios of investible projects and developing appropriate financing vehicles.
- Blended finance, such as through official development assistance and climate finance, should be used to make projects bankable and thereby leverage private-sector investment.
- “Blue carbon” investments in mangroves should be encouraged for their capacity to deliver high-quality carbon credits.
- Accessible carbon markets can also reward real carbon gains in forest restoration projects but should be part of a wider mix of income to achieve financial sustainability.
- Transitioning to higher-value economies and jobs anchored in the sustainable use and conservation of forests will require a solid enabling environment to attract conventional investment to the right areas as well as taking advantage of emerging carbon finance mechanisms.



## Ministerial Forum on Sustainable Wood

The action points are contained in the Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood (<https://www.fao.org/3/cc0247en/cc0247en.pdf>).



## **CPF Dialogue: Climate change, conflicts and food insecurity – forest solutions to tackle effects of crises**

- No matter which crisis we are facing – a pandemic, conflicts or climate change and resultant economic recession and food insecurity – we need to consider forests and natural resources as part of the solution and integrate them into recovery plans and strategies. It is time for the world to invest in forests – politically, financially and technologically.
- Transforming agrifood systems to make them more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable is key to combating food insecurity, especially in countries affected by conflict. Forests should be an integral component of this transformation.
- Halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation is key to mitigating climate change and avoiding conflicts arising from the large-scale, climate-induced displacement of people. We will only succeed by improving the governance of land and ensuring secure tenure rights for local communities and Indigenous Peoples, who are the land's stewards.
- Conflicts around forests are often brought about by power imbalances, weak governance, conflicting interests over land use, and corruption. Science can help create a better understanding of the underlying causes of conflict. The positive roles of forests in conflict resolution, for example in cross-border conservation areas, restoration initiatives and peace parks, should be recognized and strengthened.
- Youth are taking initiative and action – they have the ability to mobilize and create social change through innovation. Their initiatives need to be supported to increase their impact.
- Collaboration and cooperation at all levels is essential for scaling up ambitions and turning them into reality. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests, which consists of 15 international organizations with programmes on forests, has a significant role to play in driving real change.



## Sustainable investments in forests for people, profit and nature

- The increasing global population and the need to substitute polluting materials in developing bioeconomies will drive up wood consumption, and the forest sector must prepare for this increasing demand. More efficient wood use will not suffice, and sustainable plantations as well as forest and landscape restoration will be required.
- Mobilizing more finance and investment to create sustainable plantations, implement forest and landscape restoration and develop a forest-based bioeconomy is crucial. It will require innovative models and the strong involvement of the private sector, working in collaboration with communities and smallholders while also building on the multiple goods and services of forests.
- “Greening finance” and “financing green” are two sides of the same coin and both need to be further developed to achieve adequate finance for forests:
  - Although “greening finance” is advancing through measures such as environmental, social and governance standards and sustainable finance taxonomies, it will be insufficient if capital flows are not redirected to nature-based solutions, including forest assets.
  - Financial institutions are called on to “finance green” and to move from do-no-harm and risk-based approaches to proactive financing and investment in nature-based solutions.
- Examples of promising investment models with potential to unlock the billions of dollars needed for forest conservation, afforestation, reforestation and restoration include:
  - implementing restoration in combination with plantations as part of a business rationale;
  - blended-finance models to catalyse private-sector investment;
  - initiatives to boost the emergence of new investment vehicles; and
  - diverse local projects with potential for upscaling.
- Building on such models can help achieve the transformation at the scale required.



## High-level roundtable on the Peace Forest Initiative

- The Peace Forests Initiative is a global initiative to promote cooperation between countries to rehabilitate degraded lands and forests in fragile and conflict-affected locations while promoting peace and trust-building. The Government of the Republic of Korea and the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification jointly launched the Peace Forests Initiative in 2019.
- Planting trees is a non-political activity. In border areas, neighbouring countries, even in adverse political or other challenging situations, can be encouraged to work together in tree-planting and creating forest parks.
- Land is the foundation of life on Earth and a fundamental asset for humanity. Land degradation increases poverty and insecurity, but land restoration can be a cornerstone of stability and peace.
- The role of joint forest restoration initiatives warrants further exploration as a means for advancing peace and mutual respect across borders. It requires commitment, mutual understanding and trust.
- Governments, international and regional organizations and civil society may wish to consider advancing the Peace Forests Initiative through the following actions:
  - make initiatives inclusive and politics-free;
  - promote dialogue on tree-planting near and across borders to improve understanding and friendship among parties;
  - encourage countries and communities to develop peace parks by planting trees in disputed areas as a means for reducing tension, improving mutual understanding and building trust;
  - provide technical and financial resources for tree-planting and establishing peace parks that deliver multiple economic, social and environmental benefits such as job creation, ecosystem restoration, watershed management, erosion control and carbon storage;
  - help develop systems for management and benefit-sharing from such initiatives; and
  - invite countries that have established or are in the process of establishing forest peace parks, such as Peru and Ecuador, to share their experiences with the global community to motivate other countries embarking on such projects.

## Fire management forum – wildfires beyond forests

- The frequency, severity and extent of wildfires are increasing due to climate change and human pressure on forest lands. Landscape and forest wildfires must be tackled at the local, national, cross-border and global levels, including through strategic fire management, detection, prevention and suppression, coordinated approaches, research, and international cooperation.
- Wildfire management goes beyond forests to include infrastructure, health, transport, tourism and other sectors affected by damaging fires, therefore actions are needed at the cross-sectoral level. Integrated fire management (IFM) needs to be implemented as an essential approach for adapting to ongoing change in wildfire risk.
- IFM requires engagement with the four axes of diversity – geography, disciplines, risk and social. This will require reinforcing existing and, where necessary, building new fire management networks to enable regular engagement, relationship-building and exchanges on fire management.
- The priority actions of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 need to be further pursued, including to understand wildfire disaster risks; strengthen wildfire disaster risk governance to manage risk; invest in wildfire disaster risk reduction for resilience; and enhance wildfire disaster preparedness for effective responses.
- To address these new and emerging challenges, the Global Fire Management Platform should be used and further developed to build global technical competence and integrate the capacity of all partners.
- Emerging mechanisms such as the Assuring the Future of Forests with Integrated Risk Management Mechanism (AFFIRM) offer potential for advancing IFM. AFFIRM aims to help governments understand the factors driving wildfires and to advocate for a shift in focus from emergency responses to sustainable forest and land management practices that reduce risk, enhance readiness and facilitate recovery.

## The role of forests in a post COVID-19 recovery: re-imagining the future of forests

- Ensuring that the global social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is durable and resilient requires that it is environmentally sustainable and inclusive. The forest sector should seize the opportunity to contribute to “building back better” and support a transition to a green, healthy and resilient future.
- Forests and trees are an important element of nature-based solutions. The potential of forests to contribute to a greener and more resilient post-pandemic future should be considered in recovery plans.
- Economies and human well-being depend on the functional integrity of natural forests, which is in jeopardy. Halting deforestation and restoring degraded landscapes to reduce risk is essential.
- Forests are threatened by the increasing frequency and severity of wildfires, droughts, storms and insect attacks. Investing in efforts to enhance the resilience and conserve the biodiversity of forests can help mitigate these threats. Maintaining healthy and resilient forests and investing in restoring degraded forests at scale should be considered in COVID-19 responses and economic recovery plans to leave no one behind.
- Given rapid land-use change in forest frontier areas, there is a risk that new zoonotic diseases could emerge due to closer contact between humans and wild animals. There is an urgent need to increase preparedness for addressing such emergent diseases.
- Forests have positive effects on the health and well-being of people. They serve as traditional natural “pharmacies” and have other demonstrated beneficial impacts on physical, mental and spiritual well-being. The health benefits of forests have been important during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the recreational use of forests increasing in many countries.
- The pandemic presents an opportunity to shift the global development paradigm towards sustainability and greener, more inclusive economic development that addresses climate change and biodiversity loss as well as poverty. Current challenges in the forest sector can be turned into vehicles for transformation, driving economic and behavioural changes.



## **Sustainable forests and green energy – sustainable bioenergy for energy transition towards net zero emissions**

- Accelerating the energy transition to renewables is urgently required to achieve climate goals. As the second-largest employer in the renewable energy sector, bioenergy is an important option with the potential to bring major socio-economic benefits. Universal energy access requires replacing traditional biomass use with cleaner modern technologies.
- The forest sector is key to expanding sustainable biomass feedstocks. It can help realize the biomass feedstock potential by accelerating afforestation on degraded lands and sharing best practices in sustainable forest management.
- Traditional bioenergy is the only source of energy for 2.4 billion people around the world but is generally unsustainable. To transition to modern bioenergy, the efficiency and sustainability of existing energy value chains need to be improved or alternatives developed to reduce pressure on forest resources by adopting substitute feedstocks, technologies and bioenergy pathways.
- In countries where charcoal is an important source of household energy, the sustainability of charcoal production and trade within broader forest and agricultural landscapes is more urgent than ever. Sustainable feedstock sourcing and efficient carbonization are needed to decarbonize charcoal production.
- A comprehensive policy framework is needed to ensure sustainability, with coordinated planning across energy, forestry and other departments, as well as regulations and certification schemes. For effective policies, reliable statistical data on bioenergy are required but are currently lacking, especially in Africa.
- Stronger collaboration is needed between UN agencies and other partners, including the private sector, to foster stronger linkages between the provision of energy, particularly bioenergy, and food production to achieve the SDGs and Net Zero Growth, leaving no one behind.

## The future is now – investing in young forestry professionals and career development

- Investing in career development for young forestry professionals, using their expertise and engaging their perspectives in decision-making will help prepare the forest sector for current and future challenges and opportunities. “Young professionals should be given much greater visibility and be fully involved in decision-making.”
- Mentoring can have a high impact in developing the skills, experience and self-confidence of young forestry professionals and has demonstrated value in retaining young talent. Companies, institutions and professional associations should make mentoring a structural component of their workplaces.
- Career development programmes targeting young professionals have proven effective in enhancing the capacities of participants and strengthening their contributions to their institutions and the forest sector. Such programmes should be scaled up.
- Forestry workplace cultures need to adapt to changing expectations and compete successfully with other sectors, including through competitive wages and by elevating the contributions and perspectives of youth and young professionals and creating respectful, inclusive and diverse work environments.
- There is a strong need to increase the visibility and desirability of forestry as a career pathway. The role of the forest sector and the benefits of sustainable forest management need to be better communicated to the public and through primary and secondary education.
- Alliances and networks among young forestry professionals, and between generations of forestry professionals and students, should be encouraged to build expertise and create empowering, collaborative workplaces in which young people can thrive.



## The contribution of a forest-based circular bioeconomy to sustainable development

- Forests and forestry are central to achieving a new circular bioeconomy paradigm and should be part of national sustainable bioeconomy strategies. Forests can play a catalytic role in the transition to a bioeconomy if coherent cross-sectoral policies and joint strategies are put in place.
- A forest-based bioeconomy will contribute to the decarbonization of societies because renewable forest products both store carbon and substitute for more emission-intensive products. New opportunities for emerging forest products are rising thanks to extraordinary scientific advances and innovation in the sector. To further strengthen the shift from fossil-based materials to biomass and bio-based materials, it is necessary to de-risk private investments, balance public and private interests, and translate this balance into integrated public–private financing approaches.
- The sustainable use of wood can reduce the carbon footprints of many sectors, including construction, biochemicals and textiles. Clear and measurable sector-specific targets (e.g. “X percent of buildings made out of wood”) will help boost the transition to a circular bioeconomy. Further research, capacity development and knowledge exchange is required to increase resource efficiency and circularity and to meet the necessary quality standards and legal requirements.
- Current statistical systems cover only classical sectors and are not designed to measure bioeconomies. For effective monitoring, clear monitoring objectives need to be identified and collaboration increased across sectors to better integrate bioeconomy concepts into statistical systems.
- A growing bioeconomy can empower communities and Indigenous Peoples by creating green jobs, enabling local value adding and developing local markets while also serving subsistence purposes. Opportunities created by non-wood forest product value chains must be seized to support the uplifting of marginalized people, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the expansion of the forest sector beyond wood.
- To achieve a transition to circular bioeconomies, we will need more forests and trees. The expected increased demand for forest products will require conserving, sustainably managing and actively restoring forests as well as expanding the resource base through sustainable plantations, agroforestry and other suitable land-use systems. It is expected to further increase the value of forests.



## Rural Finance, forest and farm producers and Indigenous Peoples at the centre of the green recovery

- More than 80 percent of the world's food in value terms is produced by smallholders and family farms, and they are crucial actors for ecosystem restoration, climate-change mitigation and food security. The organization of smallholders and family farmers into forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) is essential for realizing their full potential.
- FFPOs need strengthening in their capacity to link the sustainable management of forests and farms to secure markets and enterprises that depend on maintaining diverse and complex land-use mosaics.
- The capability of banks and impact investors to address the needs of FFPOs must be improved, including how they deal with risk in forestry, agroforestry and agriculture; moreover, FFPOs must improve their financial literacy. Mechanisms to support FFPOs with their "first loans" to create track records in financial institutions would be a huge stepping stone for both parties.
- Concrete schemes are needed to secure rural women's rights to lands and forests within collective rights systems such as community forestry. Innovative mechanisms should be employed to give rural women direct access to climate finance and other dedicated financial schemes.
- Payments for the public local and global goods provided by FFPOs in maintaining forest landscapes while hugely contributing to providing food security are required to ensure the sustainability of their business cases.
- Platforms at the national or subnational levels should be created featuring banks, FFPOs, value-chain actors and knowledge agencies to increase cross-actor learning, identify lessons, and improve mutual understanding and cooperation.
- International learning and exchanges on rural and climate finance are important for enabling national and regional FFPOs, the financial sector, governments and development cooperation agencies to speak to each other and find solutions.