



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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on the occasion of
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS
21 March 2017**

“Forests and Energy”

Forests and the products they provide have a key role in securing sustainable energy globally, while at the same time being essential for biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and climate change mitigation. On the International Day of Forests, we celebrate a vision of how forests can contribute to all three of these pressing issues, in a complementary and sustainable way.

According to FAO’s Global Forest Resource Assessment, in 1990 the world had 4 128 million ha of forest; by 2015 this area had decreased to 3 999 million ha. This is a change from 31.6 per cent of global land area in 1990 to 30.6 per cent in 2015. The global framework for action on biodiversity - the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, include specific targets to halt and then reverse this forest loss, restore degraded ecosystems, and achieve sustainably managed ecosystems.

Wood is considered humankind’s first source of energy. It is still the most important single source of renewable energy, providing about six per cent of the global total primary energy supply. Under certain conditions, renewable energy based on wood biomass can reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time the conservation and restoration of forest contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and also contributes to climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and other global agendas. Therefore, as demand for energy grows, it is critically important to ensure that the use of wood for biofuels does not outweigh the benefits of biodiversity and forest ecosystem functioning and resilience.

Proven methods exist to ensure sustainable energy production in forests. Wood can be sourced from sustainably managed resources to alleviate pressures on natural and old growth forests. We should ensure that before wood is used for energy production, all attempts to re-use and recycle wood waste are made.

At the policy level, it is important to ensure that the benefits that biodiversity and healthy ecosystems provide are considered in planning and decision making by different actors in the forest sector, including governments, the private sector, and financial institutions.

This integration is underway. In addition to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals promote the importance of achieving energy, climate mitigation, protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, and other global goals. The Paris Climate Agreement highlights the role of conservation and



sustainable management of forests. The target of Land Degradation Neutrality of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification recognizes the need to support ecosystem functions and services through sustainable land management and the rehabilitation of degraded land and soil, including forests.

At the UN Biodiversity Conference held in December, 2016 in Cancun, Mexico¹, the importance of integrating the consideration of biodiversity in the forest sector was recognized by ministers and other high-level officials, who committed to further actions as part of the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being. Underscoring the relevance of forests to human well-being, it recommended designing and promoting incentive packages for the restoration, conservation and sustainable use of forest resources; promoting private sector participation in the development of production chains aimed at reducing deforestation and forest degradation while increasing the benefits of landholders and local communities; and promoting the implementation of the International Agreement on Forests, which, among other things, promotes the implementation of sustainable forest management.

Forests are one of the most biologically rich terrestrial systems. Forests provide goods and services that range from timber and non-timber forest resources to mitigating climate change and genetic resources. Forests also provide livelihoods for people worldwide and play important economic, social, and cultural roles in the lives of many indigenous peoples and local communities. By investing in technical innovation and sustainably managing forests we help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, grow the green economy, and invest in our own sustainable future.

¹ Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing, held 2 – 17 December, 2016 in Cancun , Mexico.