

India Statement

United Nations Forum on Forests

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Mr President,

At the outset, I congratulate the UNFF Secretariat for organisation of the current session of the UNFF. India appreciates the initiatives undertaken by UNFF to achieve the global forest goals and targets.

This session will play a key role in enhancing international cooperation and engagement on global forestry related issues including sustainable forest management, implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030, global forest policy coherence and common understanding of Sustainable Forest Management and will also deliberate on the emerging issues and challenges.

The UNSPF 2030 and other framework will help and guide the member states for achieving the global forest goals and targets which are more interconnected and will also integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable forest management and sustainable development. This will also lead to enhanced livelihood opportunities for the forest dependent communities.

Mr President,

India is committed to a sustainable path to prosperity of its citizens. The Indian tradition and culture rooted on equity and fairness have helped in managing the resources sustainably.

India does not merely value forests as provider of ecological and environmental services, but attaches a great importance to socio-economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions as nearly 300 million people are dependent directly or indirectly on country's forests for subsistence, livelihoods, employment and income generation.

India has a strong policy and legal framework in place to promote scientific and sustainable management of forests and to encourage the involvement and support of all relevant stakeholders including local communities dependent on forests. The robust institutional frameworks and policies have been helpful in effective conservation and management of forests and wildlife resources of the country.

Even though India has only 2.4% of the world's land mass, it supports 17% of the world population and 18% of the cattle population. Despite this huge biotic pressure the country has been able to maintain 80.21 million hectare as per India State of Forest Report 2017 which constitute as 24.39% of the geographical area of the country. There is also an increase of 8021 sq km of forest and tree cover at the national level compared to the last assessment of forest cover in India State of Forest Report 2015.

India is committed to achieve Global Forest Goals which are voluntary and universal. India's forest cover has increased by 6778 sq km which is 0.21% of total geographical area, through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation. Joint Forest Management and Community Forest Management has improved livelihood of forest dependent communities. National Compensatory Fund Management and Planning Authority will infuse about Rs 47000 crore (\$6.7 billion) for sustainable forest management at sub-national level. In line

with international commitment India is incorporating forestry and environment related issues into policy and legal framework through its new National Forest Policy which is being finalised now.

Mr President,

India is one of the 17 mega diverse countries of the world having varieties of flora and fauna species and it contributes to about 8% of the known global biodiversity. There are 16 major forest types, varying from alpine pasture in Himalayas to temperate forests, sub-tropical forests, and mangroves in the coastal line.

There are 18 notified biosphere reserves in India spread over 89530 sq km. Today there are 868 Protected Areas (PAs) including 104 National Parks and 550 wild life sanctuaries, covering 1,65,088.10sq km (5.02% of total geographical area). The National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-30 has listed various actions for natural habitats conservation by adopting a landscape/seascape approach with inclusive management.

Mr President,

India is committed at the highest level to meeting its national commitments made to the international community through UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. In recognition of India's national efforts towards climate change, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India received the Champions of the Earth award in 2018, a top United Nations honour that recognises contribution in the field of environment protection.

As a result of India's proactive and sustained actions on climate change mitigation, the emission intensity of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been reduced by 21% over the period of 2005-2014. Solar installed capacity in India has increased by about 9 times from 2.63 Gigawatt (GW) to 23.28 GW between March 2014 and August 2018. The share of non-fossil sources in installed capacity of electricity generation has increased from 30.5% in March 2015 to 35.5% in June 2018. India is partnering 22 member countries and the European Union in the 'Mission Innovation'

on clean energy, and is a co-leader in smart grid, off-grid and sustainable bio-fuels innovation challenges.

As part of our commitment and obligation to the mitigation of climate change impacts, India has committed to create of an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

Green India Mission, one of the 8 Missions under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) has an objective to increase forest cover on 5 million hectare of forest/non-forest lands and improve quality of forest cover on another 5 million hectare and improve ecosystem services including biodiversity, hydrological services, provisioning of fuel, fodder, timber and NTFP.

The afforestation and reforestation activities being undertaken using compensatory afforestation funds will go a long way in ensuring the achievement of the commitment made by India in the Paris Agreement.

Further, India is also looking beyond the natural forests to increase the forest and tree cover tree cover in the country by encouraging trees outside notified forests through agro-forestry, farm forestry and social forestry. India has also released a strategy to increase trees outside forest.

The policy and regulatory regime for promoting tree outside notified forests has also been liberalised. India has exempted felling and transit of bamboo grown on private lands by amending Indian Forest Act, 1927 and this step is expected to boost the income of the farmers of the country.

National Forest Policy of 1988 is being revised to provide more focus on soil-moisture conservation, carbon sequestration and livelihood generation for local communities. India is committed to implementation of REDD-plus in the country. The country has recently submitted its National Forest Reference Level to UNFCCC and National REDD-plus strategy at UNFCCC.

Mr President,

India is committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In line with objective of participatory forest management as outlined in National Forest Policy, Joint Forest Management Committees have been established to involve forest communities in management and conservation of forestry resources. There are approximately 118, 213 JFM Committees across the country managing 22.94 million ha of forests in the country now.

In addition, India has promulgated "The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 which recognises and vests forest rights for forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers, who have been residing in such forests for generation.

About 17.60 lakh individual titles have been granted over an area of 41.20 lakh acres of forest land which is an average of 2.36 acres of land per title. Similarly, 64,000 community forest titles have also been distributed over an area of about 99.85 lakh acres of forest land. This has enhanced the livelihood of the Tribal and other forest dwellers in the country.

Mr President,

Conservation of biodiversity is national priority. Pursuant to ratification of Convention on Biodiversity by India, National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), 2008 was finalised. With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABTs), NBAP 2008 was updated in 2014 integrating the 20 ABTs into 12 National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs).

Pursuant to these targets, 74,063 Biodiversity Management Committees have been created and 6,096 People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) with participation of entire local community to document all available traditional knowledge and related practices have been prepared by BMCs. Environmental Education (EE) has been

infused in school curricula at all levels. On an average 259 million children are getting EE every year.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change organised the celebration of International Day of Forests 2019 at national level with involvement of forestry institutions and other stakeholders including school children to mark the importance of forestry education and role of forests for a clean and green environment as per UN adopted theme "Forest and Education".

Mr President,

As highlighted in the UNSPF 2030, India reaffirms that the sustainable management of forests and trees holds the key for accelerating implementation of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of SDGs, particularly, SDG 6, 7, 11, 12 , 15 and 17. The Global Forest Financing Facilitation Networks initiative of the UNFF is very important for development of the institutional and financial capacity in developing countries for Sustainable Forest Management of all types of forests. Operationalisation of GFFFN is needed to mobilize resources, effective use of existing financial resources and to assist countries in developing national forest financing strategies.

Enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forestry related global issues especially the technical and financial ones, is required for implementing the Paris Agreement, achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and for ensuring sustainable development for all.

I thank you.
