



Protection of forests ‘fundamental to security of humanity’s place on this planet,’ UN Forum told



The Selm Muir Forest of West Lothian, Scotland. UN Photo/Robert Clamp

1 May 2017 – Kick-starting action on the recently-adopted [Global Forest Goals](#) to protect, sustainably manage and increase world’s forest area will be a key focus for delegations gathered in New York for the twelfth session of the [UN Forum on Forests](#), which opened today at United Nations Headquarters.

The six forest goals and 26 associated targets, all to be achieved by 2030, the deadline set by UN Member States for the universal attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were adopted late last week by the UN General Assembly as part of the [UN Strategic Plan for Forest 2017-2030](#), which includes a landmark target to expand the world’s forests by three per cent – an area of 120 million hectares, by 2030.

“Let us make no mistake on this matter – the health of the world’s forests is fundamental to humanity’s place on this planet,” said Assembly President Peter Thomson at the [opening](#) of the Forum’s [current session](#), emphasizing that forests were home to 80 per cent of the Earth’s land-based animal, plant and insect species.

Together, they regulate climate, prevent land degradation, reduce the risk of floods, landslides and avalanches, and protect people from droughts and dust storms. Forests also played a critical role in staving off the worst impacts of climate change, serving as the world’s second-largest storehouse of carbon, he said. Indeed, the world’s tropical forests alone retained a quarter trillion tons of carbon in biomass.

“If we are to succeed in the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the protection and sustainable management of our forests will be fundamental to the security of humanity’s place upon this planet,” Mr. Thomson said, adding that the Assembly’s decision to adopt the first-ever strategic plan was “a critical one.”

Forests presently cover 30 per cent of the Earth’s land area, or nearly four billion hectares. Sustainably managed forests are healthy, productive, resilient and renewable ecosystems, which provide vital goods and ecosystem services to people worldwide. An estimated 25 per cent of the global population depends on forests for their subsistence, livelihood, employment and income.

The UN forests plan provides a global framework for actions to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests and halt deforestation and forest degradation.

The goals cover a wide range of issues including increasing forest area and combating climate change, reducing poverty and increasing forest protected areas, mobilizing financing and inspiring innovation, promoting governance and enhancing cooperation across sectors and stakeholders.

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In his opening remarks, Peter Besseau, of Canada, Chair of the twelfth session of the Forum on Forests, said the landmark global action plan translated the aspirations of the [International Arrangement on Forest](#) into an actionable plan to guide the Forums’ work for the next 13 years. “The Global Forest Goals reflect the way the Forum is transforming its work to more effectively address the challenges facing forests and the lives of the people who depend on them.”

He urged all countries and stakeholders to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; balance economic growth, social progress and environmental sustainability; and improve governance in order to integrate forest issues, as per the guidance from the Quadrennial Programme of Work.

As a unique universal body on forests, the UN Forum has an important role to play in implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo told the Forum today.

He noted that “the new method of work of the Forum, provides an excellent opportunity for the body to address the links between forests and the [SDGs](#), as well as capacity building, financing, technology development and transfer, governance, and science-policy interface, in a holistic and coherent manner.”

The six goals not only contribute to progress on the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, but also address the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#), the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, and other international forest-related commitments and goals.

“To create a better, greener future, we need the right enabling environment - from governance systems that combat illegal deforestation, to policies that ensure equitable sharing of benefits from forests” stressed the Director of UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, Manoel Sobral Filho.



Sustainably managed forests hold vast potential to play a decisive role in ending hunger, improving livelihoods and combating climate change. Photo: FAO/Simon Maina

“When sustainably managed, forests provide essential goods and services worldwide,” said Mr. Sobral Filho, adding that for millions of people living in poverty, “forests serve as safety nets in crises and often provide pathways out of poverty.”

Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world

Discussions at the Forum will take into account the 2017 theme of the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)), *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world* and the SDGs under in-depth review by the HLPF this year.

The Forest Forum will also discuss issues related to sustainable forest management and strategies to promote implementation of the UN forest action plan.

The six Global Forest Goals

The forest-related goals proposed by the UN Forum on Forests and adopted by the UN General Assembly are:

- Global Forest Goal 1 - Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.
- Global Forest Goal 2 - Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people.
- Global Forest Goal 3 - Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.
- Global Forest Goal 4 - Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships.
- Global Forest Goal 5 - Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the UN Forest Instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda.
- Global Forest Goal 6 - Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the UN System and across Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders.

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