

Statement of European Union and its 27 Member States

27th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry

Rome, 22-26 July 2024

Agenda item 4: State of the World's Forests 2024: Forest-sector innovations towards a more sustainable future

Madam/Mr Chair,

1. Hungary is honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States at this 27th COFO session.
2. [XXX, XXXX, XXXX align themselves with this statement.]
3. Today, we convene amidst unprecedented global challenges where forests emerge as pivotal allies in our collective pursuit of sustainable development.
4. We acknowledge the key findings of SOFO (*State of the World's Forests*) 2024 and encourage Members to capitalize on, advocate for, and further develop responsible and inclusive innovations aimed at optimizing forest-based solutions to global challenges. Sustainable innovation within the forest sector is not merely advantageous; it is imperative. By harnessing human creativity, we can unlock diverse and sustainable innovations—including not only technological, but also social, financial and policy innovations that will support forest conservation, restoration, and sustainable forest management and use.
5. The EU and its Member states support the five enabling actions proposed in the background document and recommends that FAO continues to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and foster policy dialogues among Members and partners on strategies to enhance and deploy innovations within the forest sector, with the aim of maintaining the extent and condition of forests and the ecosystems services they deliver, and supporting the multiple functions forests deliver in the long-term.
6. We also recommend that FAO support Members upon request in enhancing innovation within the forest sector, the transition towards a sustainable and circular bioeconomy in a resource efficient way, and the opportunities presented by the sustainable use of non-wood forest products (NWFPs). Climate change exacerbates forest vulnerabilities to wildfires and pests. Nearly 50% of global wood production is used for fuel. Sustainable forest management with a focus on forest resilience should aim to adapt forests to climate change. Innovations must guide us towards sustainable forest management practices, and diversified uses of NWFPs within a carbon-neutral, sustainable and circular bioeconomy framework, while minimizing pollution and operating in accordance with One Health; contribute to the sustainable, efficient and circular use of natural resources.

7. We promote management practices that support biodiversity and resilience, such as the creation or maintenance at stand and landscape level of genetically and functionally diverse, mixed-species forests.
8. Finally, we note that the SOFO 2024 remains silent on the impact of the war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as on the consequences of other conflicts on the forestry sector. We recall the decision adopted by the FAO Council at its 169th, 170th, 171st, 172nd, 174th and 175th sessions, the 43rd session of the FAO Conference as well as the FAO's Forestry Support Strategy for Ukraine 2023-2027 and stress the need to continue their full implementation. We call on FAO within its mandate to closely monitor and analyse the impact of conflicts on forest sector globally as well as specifically and include such analysis in up-coming SOFO reports.

Thank you Madam/Mr. Chair.