

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

Statement by Indian Delegation, Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change at the Twenty seventh session of Committee on Forestry, COFO held from 22-26 July 2024.

Mr. Chairperson and Distinguished Delegates,

India would like to extend appreciation to the FAO for organising the 27th session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 27). The deliberations in this committee will play a key role in further strengthening international cooperation in the forestry sector.

Mr Chairperson,

India is one of the mega-biodiverse countries and among the countries that have managed to increase its forest and tree cover, over the years, in harmony with the economic growth. India has forest and tree cover covering approximately 24.62% of its total geographical area.

Gain in India's forest and tree cover is attributed to the collective efforts of the Government agencies, research institutions, village level organisations, the private sector and other stake holders.

Mr Chairperson,

The State of the World's Forests 2024 highlights the importance of innovations to scale up forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use as solutions to Global challenges.

Innovations in the forestry sector are now imperative, offering the potential to transform how we protect, enrich and manage the forestry resources sustainably. Innovation and adoption of the appropriate technologies are required to formulate the best strategies to address the critical issues of Land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change.

India has brought out the National Agroforestry Policy during 2014 aimed to promote agroforestry and farm forestry on mission mode and to meet the demand for timber

and to expand green cover outside the forest lands. Agroforestry in India spans over 28 million hectares and has supported in reducing pressure on our natural forests by meeting more than 80% of the demand for wood and wood products. As a result of the continued dedicated efforts, India's agroforests have increased by 2.13 million hectare during the period 2103 to 2023.

Recently, the Government of India has launched the Green Credit Programme, designed to mobilize finance from entities and incentivize them to take up voluntary afforestation and eco-restoration of degraded forest lands in an extensive manner.

India gives high emphasis on conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of healthy wildlife habitats. India has a large network of National parks, Wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves and others.

We have successfully reintroduced Cheetah in India, through an inter- continental translocation program.

Building on the success of the Project Tiger and Conservation Programmes for other wildlife species, the International Big Cat Alliance has been unveiled by India in March 2024. The aim of this alliance is to strengthen global efforts for conservation of Seven Big Cats through collaborative efforts.

Mangroves play a vital role in protecting coastal areas and also support a rich diversity of marine and terrestrial life, including many endangered species. The Government of India has initiated a 5-year mission aimed at conservation, management and restoration of mangrove areas spanning approximately 540 square kilometre.

Sustainable forest management has been at the core of India's National Forest Policy. The Forest areas are managed through effective implementation of scientifically prepared long-term management plans. The Government of India has introduced the latest revision of the National Working Plan Code in 2023, along with the Forest Management Standards.

Mr Chairperson,

The threat of wildfire is rapidly growing on a global scale. Fire intensity, scale and duration are increasing due to weather and also land-use changes. We need to work collectively for formulation and implementation of suitable strategies to control and

manage forest fire with priority over fire prevention, early warning and quick response to control forest fire. India has adopted an integrated approach with community involvement and a range of technology applications including risk-zonation mapping, dissemination of pre-fire and near real time alerts and rapid response mechanism.

India is committed to enrichment and scientific management of the forestry resources through collective efforts at the regional, national and Global level. We are hopeful that discussion by this committee will steer our collective efforts to tackle the shared challenges in the forestry sector and achieve the global forest goals.

Thank you Chair.