

## **Statement from Republic of Korea**

**Song Hee NAM, Director General**

**Korea Forest Service**

Thank you for giving me the floor.

As this is my first intervention at the 27th session of the Committee on Forestry, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all FAO staff members for your hard work dedicated to COFO27. I express my profound respect to the Chair and Vice-chairs, the Secretary of COFO, and Drafting Committee's efforts as well. In 2022, COFO26 had experienced the lasting effects of the pandemic, but today it is a great pleasure to meet with fellow members in Rome for COFO27.

With the environmental crisis and food security crisis escalating due to climate change, various areas of innovation including science, technology, policy, system, society, economy, etc. are called for to fully realize the potential of forests which are the heart of nature-based solutions.

In this light, the Republic of Korea is pleased that SOFO 2024's launch was timely and encourage more countries, international organizations, research, and educational institutions around the world to take note of its content.

As a country that has achieved restoring its once degraded forests by introducing innovative systems, policy, and technology, Korea deeply understands the significance of innovation in the forestry sector for humanity's sustainable future.

However, on the other hand, various challenges arise in sustainably managing these restored forests and we are introducing various innovative methods to address them.

For example, the Republic of Korea's forests that were restored by large-scale afforestation in the 1960s through the 1970s, face challenges such as their ability to absorb greenhouse gases declining due to aging. To respond to this issue, Korea is promoting sustainable and

eco-friendly harvesting practices for aging forests and striving for balanced age structures in forests.

Furthermore, Korea's citizens tend to have negative perceptions towards harvesting and this poses a challenge on sustainable forest management. To improve these conditions, the Korea Forest Service actively promotes the necessity of harvesting and the importance of sustainable timber production. The Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood adopted at the 15th World Forestry Congress in 2022 played a significant role in enhancing public awareness.

Moreover, to address issues of labor shortages in the forestry sector due to Korea's rapid population decline and aging, we actively utilize innovative technologies such as LiDAR, short for Light Detection and Ranging, AI, and drones. Efforts are also underway to introduce high-performance forestry machinery and equipment suitable for Korea's terrain.

Like other countries, Korea is also experiencing an increase in forest disasters such as forest fires and landslides due to climate change. To respond, we have established legal frameworks for integrated forest disaster management and strengthened education and training for disaster response personnel. Additionally, we have developed a forest disaster prediction system based on digital technology, data, and evidence to provide real-time information and alerts to citizens nationwide.

The Republic of Korea aims to share its experiences in innovating the forestry sector internationally through collaborations with numerous international organizations such as FAO, UNEP, UNCCD, CBD, and AFoCO. We hope to collaborate and engage in dialogue with diverse countries and international organizations to address the challenges we face together.

Thank you.