

Statement of European Union and its 27 Member States

27th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry

Rome, 22-26 July 2024

Agenda item 8.1: FAO's work on urban forestry and its contribution to urban agrifood systems transformation

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. Scientific evidence shows us that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, causing global warming on the planet, are produced mainly by urban areas; cities today, with 55% of the world's population that is urban, are responsible for 70% of global CO₂ emissions. And yet, according to UN projections, more than 2.4 billion people will become urbanised in the next 30 years, which implies building the equivalent to a city of more than six million people, every month. We wish to highlight that this is an alarming prospect, considering the environmental, social and health problems generated by the consumption focused 'way-of-life' of cities.
4. Therefore, addressing the above urban challenges calls for the recognition of the declared need of bringing nature back to cities and reward community action, that is identifying solutions to climate and health crises by mimicking natural systems, as also emphasized by the recently established New European Bauhaus program of the European Union.
5. According to FAO, urban forests are the backbone of green infrastructures, bridging rural and urban areas, while ameliorating a city's environmental footprint, as trees, forests, and other green areas, in and around cities, provide a wide spectrum of solutions to combat the effects of climate change.
6. We further encourage the adoption of a new vision for cities of the world, the Bio(based)-Cities founded on Forest-Based Solutions which include, beside the diffusion of trees, urban forests and greening, also the use of structural timber and other renewable materials to substitute for greenhouse gas intensive products, while extending carbon storage in wood beyond the life of trees; the assembly, disassembly and re-cycling of wood-based bio-products; the conservation of biodiversity at all scales; and the harnessing and flow of renewable energy.

7. We recommend that FAO, through the FAO Green Cities Initiative and other ongoing programmes and projects, provide technical assistance on urban and peri-urban forestry, urban and peri-urban agriculture, and bioeconomy for green urban regeneration, with the aim of increasing the resilience, health and well-being of urban and peri-urban dwellers, improving the sustainability of agrifood systems, and supporting sustainable urban development.

8. We urge to promote an interlinked and coordinated approach between FAO, and other UN initiatives on Green and Tree Cities, with EU supported networks of Global Covenants of Mayors for a transformational change towards resilient, bioeconomy-based, Bio-Cities that will make full use of the potential of green infrastructures, including urban forests and other Forest-Based Solutions, to advance towards the One Health strategy and to help citizens to mitigate and adapt to the growing impacts of climate change and of health crises, in urban areas around the world.

Thank you, Madam/Mr Chair